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the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are under 15 years of age is expected to increase by 1.5 billion.

As the world's population grows, the demand for food and other resources will increase. The world's population is expected to reach 9 billion by the year 2050. This means that there will be 9 billion people competing for the same resources that we have today.

The world's population is growing so fast that it is difficult to keep track of. In 1990, there were about 5 billion people in the world. By the year 2000, there will be about 6 billion people. By the year 2050, there will be about 9 billion people.

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# OUT OF WORK

A STUDY OF EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES : THEIR TREAT-  
MENT OF THE UNEMPLOYED, AND THEIR  
INFLUENCE UPON HOMES  
AND BUSINESS

BY

FRANCES A. KELLOR

Fellow, College Settlements Association  
Author of "Experimental Sociology," etc.

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PUBLISHED FOR THE INTER-MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE  
ON HOUSEHOLD RESEARCH

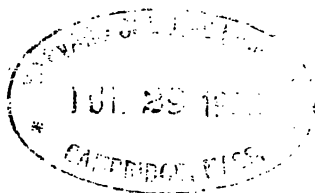
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BY

FRANCES A. KELLOR

Published, November, 1904

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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

TO  
M. D. D.

WHOSE IDEAL HOME AND FRIENDSHIP GIVE COURAGE FOR TRUTH  
AND ENDURANCE OF CRITICISM  
AND WHOSE SPIRIT OF FAIRNESS, BELIEF IN CO-OPERATION  
AND UNSELFISH ENERGY HAVE MADE POSSIBLE MANY OF THE  
IMPROVEMENTS IN NEW YORK CITY  
WHICH HAVE RESULTED FROM THIS STUDY.



## PREFACE

THE employment agency is so vitally related to the home and to the business house, and concerns the unemployed so deeply, that this volume is addressed to them rather than to students and educators. In order that they may understand the conditions, although much of the material is technical, the author has omitted tables and statistical details, at the risk of being called unscientific. It is the patrons of agencies—the home-makers and practical business men—who can best establish standards and improve conditions, and if this study will bring the facts clearly to them, and will serve to arouse city officials and stimulate the public to a greater consciousness of social responsibility, the investigators will have received the highest compensation possible.

The investigation of employment agencies was first suggested in 1901, when the author was conducting a study of the women in the workhouse on Blackwell's Island. Their experiences with some agencies, and through answering advertisements for help, indicated that abuses were common, and that there was a real need for further knowledge. In the summer of 1902, this investigation was planned as a special piece of research work in connection with the New York Summer School of Philanthropy, but was extended to the cities of Boston, Phila-

delphia, and Chicago, under a fellowship from the College Settlements Association. The fellowship was renewed in 1903, and an extra appropriation was made for the completion of the study. In May, 1903, the author was called to New York City to make a special study of every agency, because of the many abuses which had been brought to the attention of Mr. James B. Reynolds, of the Bureau of Licenses. This comprehensive investigation was instigated and supported by members of the Woman's Municipal League of New York, and to their interest and co-operation is due its successful completion. To the chairman of the Legislative Committee of this League, Miss Margaret D. Dreier, must be accredited the enactment of the new State law regulating agencies, and much of the successful constructive work which has been started in New York City.

Co-operation has been the keynote, and time, money, and energy have not been spared to make the investigation thorough and impartial, and the author is prepared to substantiate every statement, based, as it is, upon her own or her associates' experience and observation. For every agency visited—and there were 732—there is a record, affidavit, or other documentary evidence, and whenever opinions are given, an attempt is made to distinguish them from facts. If undue emphasis seems to be placed upon the evils, it is not due to a desire to be unfair, but is proportional to the need for improvement and regulation; for the attitude of the investigators toward the agencies is sympathetic rather than critical, and some of the most valued co-operators

have been the honest employment agents. No further evidence of the existence of such agents is needed, than the fact that, together with the statement of conditions, the author is able to show improvements which have been started by them, since they have learned the facts. It is to their credit that they were not cognizant of many of the evils and could scarcely believe them, but it is more to their credit that in New York City, at least, they have organized and are determined to co-operate in enforcing laws and in raising standards.

This study is not the work of one individual, but of nine investigators. The author most appreciatively believes that the New York and Philadelphia study would not have reached its high degree of thoroughness and accuracy, without the co-operation of Miss C. M. Anderson, an investigator of high integrity and skill. The men employed to ascertain the moral conditions, a task at all times involving risk and skill, proved efficient and trustworthy, and the author is especially indebted to Mr. J. F. Maher and Mr. Michel Mandl. Many others have assisted with data, suggestions, criticisms, and good cheer, the last by no means an insignificant factor in a field oftentimes dark and forbidding. Among these has been Mr. Gino C. Speranza, whose contribution upon the Padrone has proved invaluable. Any error in the presentation of facts, analysis, or recommendations is not to be attributed to any co-worker, but to the author.

F. A. K.



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# OUT OF WORK

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## CHAPTER I

### EXPERIENCES AND PROBLEMS OF THE INVESTIGATORS

EVERY one admits that one of the most difficult subjects upon which to secure any kind of information is "domestic service." The home and all pertaining to it is carefully shielded from the prying eyes of "searchers for truth," and the intelligence office, being so closely related to it, presents many of the same difficulties. There is also the fear that some competitor will profit by its disclosures, for the rivalry is keen. The general public, even among householders, does not realize the extent of the intelligence office as a medium of exchange for household workers. In the four cities included in this study there are 834 licensed agencies, 522 of which are in New York, 115 in Chicago, 110 in Philadelphia, and 87 in Boston, and fully three fifths of these supply workers for the household, together with other employees, and over one half are for this purpose exclusively.

The material for such a study is readily accessible. All of the cities issue licenses and courteously

furnished us with lists. The method of study, however, was a much more difficult proposition. No private business can be investigated, with even a remote approach to accuracy, by any one who goes openly and avowedly as an investigator; and this is especially true of enterprises that are in the least degree questionable. Such visitors are regarded with suspicion, are considered as intruders, motives are misunderstood, and all kinds of misrepresentations are made, not from love of lying, but through antagonism, based on self-protection. But when an investigator goes as a patron, all this is changed. Suspicion becomes friendliness, and any reasonable inquiries are answered, not always accurately, but at least without malicious perversion. This is true not simply because a fee is paid, for ten times the amount cannot purchase the information. After several attempts by other methods, it was found that accurate results could be obtained only by visiting these offices in the rôle of employers and employees, which the writer and her eight associates did. Frequently an office was visited several times by different people, if it seemed to require close observation. This included all of the licensed offices in New York, and three fourths of those in Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Others in smaller cities, as New Haven, Connecticut; Columbus, Ohio, and St. Louis, Missouri were added, to ascertain the difference in conditions; but they proved to be of degree rather than of kind.

It was soon found that even this plan left many questions unanswered; and there were but two points of view represented, that of the employer

and that of the employee. But the owner of the office has his side as well. That there are difficulties in running an office, and much abuse is heaped upon it, was learned by trying to purchase offices and by asking owners for suggestions for running them in non-competitive parts of the city. In this way we secured some pretty fair material. Where an office seemed morally bad, men were sent there to verify the impression, and, if possible, secure legal testimony. There will be many criticisms of this method—they have already been encountered in planning the work, and in answer to these the question must be put: Does not the end justify the means? Is it not expedient and right to employ this, the only accurate method of investigation, rather than to continue the present conditions, which, beyond doubt, are at least partly responsible for the doubling of wages, the dissatisfaction of employees, the interference with households, the crowding of statutes with laws that mean nothing and do not even touch the problem in hand, the swindling of penniless, homeless, but worthy men and women out of fees and positions, and the misleading of ignorant immigrants and innocent city and country girls to the number of many thousands a year?

Because of these methods, we feel that an apology is due to the many employers with whom we have engaged but failed to appear; for our poor services in their homes, and for our early departures; and we are sure that in their estimation we have long since been added to the endless list of incompetents and household tramps. We regret that we have

consumed so much of the valuable time of the employer and office, especially since we are forced to state many uncomplimentary things, and they must think their unknown co-operation and confidence misplaced. As a compensation for the false hopes which we may have raised in the hearts of employers, that they had at last found an "ideal servant," we can only hope these results may really send such to them. We have tried to compensate the offices for all their efforts on our behalf by paying fees, and not insisting, with the bayonet of the law, that they be returned. To the offices, if they recall us at all, we are at best "rounders" and not much worth while anyway, so they can scarcely miss us.

But employers, offices, and employees drove us to this. Employers would not tell us how they fed, clothed, and otherwise treated their employees, and we agreed with them that ordinarily this was "none of our business," but it was essential to understand the problem, so we became employees in order to find out. Employees would not tell us their troubles, the demands made upon them, or their experiences, so we had to become employees and mingle with them, and then they made us their confidants and poured out their tears and wrath. Offices refused to say anything of their methods, or even let us in, so we became employers, and could wait about at will and be treated just like any one else. We had twinges of conscience about fair play, honesty, and veracity, and any fair co-operation on their part would have changed our wavering selves back into honesty, and when an office was kind or fair or honest, we so wanted to open our hearts and

## Problems of the Investigators 5

receive absolution for our sins that only the good of the cause forbade.

At first we made many blunders, because we had all the old-fashioned ideas of our training. We tried to dress like employees and become acquainted, but they held aloof until we had learned their language and habits, and could talk in up-to-date slang about places and mistresses. We were green about household duties and wages and rights, but so free has been their advice that we now know where "we are at" and possess the requisite "sand"—at least they associate with us. And after a time we became so proficient that we could pass for either the better class of employees or the poorer class of employers, and frequently we did not know which we would be until we saw the office. If it was "swell," we crept into the employees' quarters; and if poor, we swept into the employers' room. When we chanced into offices for men, we could not apply for a cook's place, but were necessarily looking for a gardener, otherwise we would have been turned out and learned nothing. If we found an office well crowded with girls it would have been a lost opportunity not to have mingled with them.

When any individual assumes a different personality it requires constant tact and self-possession. When we came straight up against an old acquaintance who was looking for a maid and were sent in to her to fill that place, something needed to be done at once, for the manager was ever watchful. On one occasion two associates happened to be in the same office, and one was sent in as a cook to the other, who was an employer. In a spirit of mischief the

"cook" insisted that she would go, even though we replied, "The wages are small, we give no privileges, and have seven children who play in the kitchen." Self-possession was certainly in demand. When an office manager says familiarly, "Well, sis, out of a job?" and tries to lead us down the room by the hand, it is rather difficult to stifle pride and dignity and resent it in a manner in keeping with a new station.

Then we made acquaintances invaluable to the work, but they were apt to affect our peace of mind by appearing at inopportune times. Going up-town in the car one night, we were reading quietly, when suddenly a large Slavish woman suddenly rose and shouted in broken English: "I got a girl for you—plenty girls now; come to-morrow." Only public recognition and a promise to come satisfied this business zeal. In another instance we were "cornered" and had to pose as a mother, with a baby, looking for work, and later when in a restaurant with friends, we were suddenly confounded by a call from an office associate who used our office name and asked after the baby.

But these were among the least of our real difficulties. The treatment of employees in some offices, even the best, is so brutal and humiliating that our increasing wonder is, that employees are as good as they are. We are absolutely sure we could not have continued the rounds of these offices, seriously looking for work, as these women do, year after year, without becoming untruthful, dishonest, impertinent, and perhaps intemperate and immoral.

When we entered the average office, the first

effort of the attendant was to ascertain if we were an employer or employee. Usually this was apparent, and some offices—in fact, all that could afford two rooms—had a “ladies’” room and a “servants’” or “girls’” room. It is no exaggeration to say that, almost without exception, the kind of treatment we received depended primarily and almost entirely upon whether we were “ladies” or “servants.” As the former, we were almost invariably accorded some measure of courtesy. In the best offices, chairs were brought to us, we were given individual attention, the attendants rose from their desks or tables to talk to us, and the attitude was, “What do *you* wish?” “What can *I* do for you?” In a few of them we were ushered in and out by polite attendants, our orders were placed, and fees were not mentioned until we engaged or ordered a girl sent to our homes. Employers are advised in a deferential way, but little dictating is attempted. The rooms accorded us were always the best furnished and some few were not only comfortable but luxurious. In the poorer offices not only the best, but sometimes all of the furniture was in the employers’ room.

Occasionally we went into “ladies’” rooms and allowed them to talk to us politely for a few minutes. Then we said we were looking for places, and they had misunderstood us. Such a situation certainly gives some idea of the possibilities of change in the human voice and attitude. It never failed and the replies in some good offices were something like this, with just a note of wrath: “Well, why did n’t you say so? get in the other room,” or, “You would



make a pretty servant; don't know your place." It is the medium and best-grade offices where the contrast in treatment is most striking. Without any experience at all any one can enter these with her eyes closed, and if she hears nothing but the voice of the manager can tell if she is in the "ladies' " or "servants' " room. In the one it is modulated, polite, smooth, pleasing, courteous; in the other, rough, arrogant, and discourteous, and often nothing expresses it but "fresh." This contrast in treatment must impress even the dullest employees. One of the most fashionable offices in New York makes its employees stand all day—"The room holds more," one girl said. Little thought or money is expended to make the employees' rooms either comfortable or healthful, and yet the girls wait all day, while at best the employers wait a few minutes or an hour. Employees cannot help but contrast a dirty, disorderly kitchen where they are huddled together with the clean, comfortable parlor where they are taken to talk to employers.

In some these girls are actually herded and treated like cattle. In one Swedish office, run by two young men, one guarded the door of the employees' room and by promises and threats and actual force made it impossible for them to get out without paying a fee. We had to assume much of our ordinary English and dignity, and even expose our knowledge of the law, before we were allowed to depart. Swearing at employees who are restless or demand their fees back is too common an occurrence to need mention. The means of maintaining order in some of the crowded offices is not only in-

sulting, but brutal, and the best employees or girls seeking housework for the first time will certainly not come here after one or two experiences. In a good office, a woman who insisted upon her fee was pushed out of the door and downstairs for "creating a disturbance," for she was encouraging others to demand their fees also. She said she had waited two weeks and had not even had an offer of a position. To insist upon "rights" after paying a fee is more often than not the signal for insolence and wrath, and employees are pretty sure to be ignored thereafter in the selection for positions. Sudden, uncomplaining, patient, submissive, must be the attitude, unless they respond to the familiarities and "jollyng" of attendants or "work" them for favors.

Discourtesy, noticeable lack of respectful address, "bossing," and contradictions are the things found where the absolute brutality does not exist. We fixed our wages—the office said "Change it or get out." We stated the kind of work we wanted—the office said "Do something different." We wanted work in a private family—the office cajoled us into going into a hotel, which spoils any good girl for all time for a family. We stated we were twenty-five years old, and the office replied, "You are only twenty for our business." In other words, so far as it possibly can, it makes girls over to suit whatever position it has on hand, and employees are forced, through such means, into places which they are not fitted to fill and into work in which they have no interest.

If the real problem in "domestic service" is how

to increase and improve the supply of employees, what is the effect of such treatment? We have talked with employees in stores and factories and have employed some of them to visit offices where a "make-up" would not answer and they felt very strongly about this treatment. We wanted their own impressions, because we felt that the reader would believe that we saw it only from a different or "class" point of view, and that it did not represent the feeling of actual workers. To us it was a new, embarrassing, and certainly humiliating thing to go in to an employer whom we had never seen and have her say, "Well, Mary, let's see your reference," or, "Katie, where did you work last?" This more than any other one thing helped us to feel like "servants." But they do not say this in stores and factories—the places where the employer is looking for "improved servants." We are not advocating any reforms, only giving our own experience, and that of hundreds of others, and when employers say to us, "Girls do not mind," we must reply, "But they do." One girl so well summarized the situation that her reply is worth quoting: "Of course when I am with a mistress and she knows me, I am glad to be called Mary, but why should every mistress do it before she even engages us, and why should it be done in such a way that the iceman and grocer's boy and every Tom, Dick, and Harry always calls us that? I am Mary to every guest in the house and every stranger who appears at the kitchen door; in fact, how can I respect myself when no one else shows me any!" If the employees whom we met in offices did not care, then

they had become accustomed to what seems to them to be a necessity, or they did not belong to the class which improves the service. When an office attendant presents a girl to an employer he rarely says "Miss," and frequently only the first name is given. We asked some employers who had had girls for a time—'running into years—their surnames, and some of them said: "Why, really, I don't believe I know; you see, she is just Katie to us." We do not believe that any American girl of poor but good family, especially from a small town, who has had the training required, and possesses the amount of sensibility necessary for an ideal maid, could have helped the rising flush that came into our faces when employers calmly raised their lorgnettes and looked us over, point for point, exactly as one estimates animals at a stock show; or when they commented upon our clothes, and the "size of your feet," as not belonging to the traditional working girl; or upon the condition of our hands as having "seen too little hard work"; or that we evidently "expect the mistress's clothes in addition to your wages." This was not only in immigrant, but in the best offices, and these were real experiences, and there were questions and comments even more humiliating. We did excite a little curiosity, but there was no reason to believe that an employer so publicly personal would not exercise a strict censorship over every action and impulse of a "servant." Girl after girl has come back into the waiting-room, and when anxiously asked if she was "engaged" would break out in wrath or tears and say, "No! what do you think she asked me," and would relate personalities

which the finest analysis could not connect with requirements for a waitress or a maid.

One employer was about to engage us because we looked "promising," though she said "one can't depend much on looks." Then she asked us where we lived and we said on Ludlow Street (which was true, in a settlement). She replied that she did not know that street, and, unable to suppress a wicked uprising, we replied, "It's off the Bowery and has a jail on it." She held up her hands in horror, unconscious of our "promising" appearance, and said, "You never, never will do for my house," and then, as though we were some objectionable object, she moved away and said to the agent, "Take her away; bring me another girl at once." And she took one who had been the rounds of all the dirty, disreputable places in the negro quarter.

In another we had doubts cast upon our intelligence. We applied for a chambermaid's position, hoping no one would appear, and we could talk to the attendant. But out from behind a screen there loomed up a huge boarding-house keeper, who said she had been looking for us all day. We were still green and did not see any other way out, for she wanted us at once and said, "You can get your baggage later if you have any." We were about to pay our fees and depart, when she said, "Can you wait on table?" We replied that we never had, whereupon she studied us for a few minutes and then said: "By gum, you don't look as if you could ever learn, either; I won't take you." The greetings with which we were received by the other employees on our return were certainly entertaining.

At another office we were dismissed in a more insolent way, because we modestly did not think we could thoroughly clean ten big rooms in two days.

The employer who is not well or stylishly dressed does not always have an easy time, especially in the poorer offices and negro places. We had an interesting experience while looking for a general-housework girl. The waiting girls were mostly Irish of an inferior type, who looked as though they were recovering from the effects of intemperance. When we expressed a wish for a young woman, a chorus of voices broke out. "She 's married a widower"; "Lord, she do be too mean to have any children"; "She 'd be a worr'in' if the cat was lickin' the butter"; "Afraid to take an old one for fear she 'd know too much." Such disrespectful remarks are common about employers in the poorer offices, but are usually in a language which she is supposed not to know.

As employees, when we refused hotel and restaurant positions, we were frequently told we were "lazy," "good for nothing," "not worth your salt," or "more trouble than you are worth." The first thing that usually happened to us on entering the "servants' room" was an attendant pouncing on us with "Have you paid your fee?" If we had not, many roughly told us to "pay or get out." If we still refused, we were sometimes let alone, but no positions were offered, and the clerk would sneeringly remark, "If you knew enough to pay your fee you would be getting these." In some they said it was "no day hotel," and we could not wait

unless we paid, and they were so disagreeable we were actually forced out.

In one negro office, when we applied for a maid, we were told that they did little business in summer, as the proprietor was in Saratoga. Meaning only to be pleasant, we inquired if she had an office there. Indignantly she replied: "I dun have yo' understan' she is a lady of wealth and has her country home there, and she tak' her grand-chillin there 'cause New Yo'k am so bad for dem in summer, and she do keep open house for all her frien's. She doan have to run dis business—she can retire on her money." We were so utterly "squelched" that we made no further efforts for a maid.

In the sweet innocence of the first days of our investigation, we ventured to ring the front door bells of imposing houses, because our list said they were offices. Such a "raking over the coals" as we received at one for not going to the basement door, and were asked, "Do you want to wait on a lady or be waited on by one?" Fortunately we were too confused to answer, else we might have "forgotten our place." In another instance they told us to go below, saying: "What ladies would want to come here with you all over the steps?" In another, while waiting for a position, two sisters came back and said they had given up their positions because the mistress was much older than her husband, was very jealous, spent all her time watching him because he had married her for her money, that her father lived there, was an idiot, and was very disagreeable to care for, and that the lady of the house drank, and the husband had offered them higher wages if they

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would remain. The proprietor joked with them in a frivolous manner about the "chances you stand of cutting the wife out, and are very silly, for in a place like that there is always plenty of money to be made." This was a large, better-class American office, and when we asked if we could get lodging there she said indignantly we "ought to know enough to see that such a style of house would not do such a thing."

In another large American office the male clerk came into the room and shouted out the positions wanted. When no one replied he then singled out girls, and we asked why no one responded, and a girl said: "Because he always answers us impudently, and picks out the ones he wants to have anyway." He always posted the girls before they went in to an employer. The girls said they came there chiefly to gossip and would not take positions while they had money.

Our experiences have not always been unpleasant, and this was especially true in German offices. We often met with a sympathetic attitude and they were interested in our stories. In one office when we replied, "We live on Rivington Street," an old German woman said, "That is a bad, crowded neighborhood and you had better stay with me for twenty cents a night, though I can't keep you long." They sometimes offered to trust us for fees when we said we had no money, and gave us good advice about work, and we are convinced that the only friends many girls have are these employment agents. In one they would not board or lodge us, but said, "You may do your washing here and bring your food and cook it."



Notwithstanding the many humiliating interviews, there have been many employers who have been considerate and even courteous to us, and we are sure if housework ever becomes our portion, that we will seek them and offer ourselves. They always secured the help if it was there, and others wondered what was the trouble and accused the office of partiality. When engaged by these, employees came back to say good-by to some waiting friend, enthusiastic and happy. Indeed, it was these contacts with the truly gracious employer which gave us much of our courage to go on with our work and meet the disagreeable things which we knew would come. And if a word of apology is needed to those whom we have deceived and disappointed, a word of thanks is also due to the considerate employer, who treated us as though we had souls as well as bodies, and for whom we would have labored if we could.

## CHAPTER II

### DESCRIPTIONS OF PLACES AND PEOPLE

This material was gathered entirely from visits to offices as employers, employees, or would-be purchasers, and is made up from these original records and blanks.

INTELLIGENCE office is the term applied to those which supply household workers, and are thus distinguished from employment bureaus, which furnish employees for all kinds of positions. About three fifths of all the offices supply household workers, and roughly estimated about the same percentage of employers and employees use them. The first step in this investigation was to observe their location and the conditions under which they did business.

One of the factors which determines the character of offices is nationality. This divides them into immigrant, separate nationalities, negro, and American offices. In New York the immigrant office is most common, and includes Jewish, Bohemian, Hungarian, Polish, Russian, Austrian, etc. Besides these New York has many which may be called separate nationality offices, as German, Swedish, Irish, Danish, etc., which do not deal exclusively with immigrants. Chicago has a number of separate nationality and few immigrant offices, while Boston and Philadelphia have few immigrant and many general offices. New York and Philadelphia have quite a

number for negroes, while Boston and Chicago have but few. New York has a few special offices, as one each for Japanese, Chinese, Greeks, and Italians, and New York and Philadelphia are also well provided with those for the French. Separate nationality offices do not, as a rule, import employees and give girls of their own nationality the preference, as in German offices are found mostly Germans, though others are supplied. American offices are run by people born in this country and supply all nationalities. A few exclude negroes, while negro places, as a rule, furnish both white and negro help, though in New York and Philadelphia some confine their work to their own class. Boston and Philadelphia present two extremes. In the former the best negro help is found in white offices, and in the latter reputable white offices prefer whites or separate the negroes and whites in their waiting-rooms.

Nationality has some influence upon the location of offices. In Boston, except the few negro and some of the best American ones, they are concentrated in the crowded downtown districts, the others being widely distant. This is not likely to change, as the policy is to reduce the number, and applicants are forced to buy out existing ones before licenses will be issued.

In New York there are two groups of immigrant offices, one on the lower East side, between Sixth and Canal streets and off the Bowery, and the other near the Battery. Others are scattered about. American offices have no well-defined locality, but are run more to supply neighborhoods. Sixth Avenue at about Twenty-third Street has the great-

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est number. Separate nationality offices are found in groups, as the Swedish on Third and Fourth avenues above Twenty-fifth Street, with an occasional one on adjoining streets; the German on Third and Sixth avenues and adjoining streets; and the Irish on Sixth Avenue and adjoining streets. Negro offices are in the negro sections about West Thirty-first, Fifty-third, and Fifty-ninth streets. Unlike Boston, few are in the heart of the busy district.

In Philadelphia negro offices are more numerous, and are chiefly in clusters, while the immigrant and American ones are well scattered. Occasionally they may be found on the same street and in the same house.

In Chicago the group system is perfected and but few offices are downtown on such streets as Canal and Washington and Michigan Avenue. These groups are widely scattered, the north, west, and south sides each having its own. The distances are so great that many are found in isolated places and have practically all of the patronage of that neighborhood.

In all cities the tendency is toward groups, and proprietors explain this on the ground that patrons go from place to place, and when offices are near together they attract large numbers, and they find in some one of them what they seek. The concentration in the business district in Boston is partly due to the law, which makes them more business-like and has eliminated many of the home concerns.

There are but few public enterprises in which the kind and condition of the buildings and surroundings

are so important. In New York, of 313 offices which supply households, 120 are in tenements, 107 in apartments—39 in residences, and 49 in business houses—a total of 266 which are a part of the family life and 227 which affect more than one family. This means that in 85 per cent. a large number of strangers, about whose character, life, and habits little is known, are brought into the daily life of the family, or are attracted to buildings where members of many families, especially mothers and daughters, must meet them. They go from office to office, and, among other evils, disease has been traced through them to the places where they have waited or lodged.

To a less degree these conditions are true in other cities. Philadelphia, because of its many small houses, has 84 per cent. in private residences, about 10 per cent. in apartments, and about 3 per cent. each in tenements and business buildings. In Chicago about 81 per cent. are in buildings occupied by families. In Boston 73 per cent. are in business, and but 27 per cent. in residence buildings. These figures are not for the entire number, but for those investigated, and while not as accurate as for New York, where all were visited, are fairly representative, for in the selection an attempt was made to cover all districts and grades.

Those in business houses are easily found and usually have signs and other means by which attention is attracted. In many apartment buildings and private houses there are conspicuous, separate entrances for employers and employees, and signs are freely used. More exclusive offices bear no evi-

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dence of their business. In other large apartment buildings the halls are frequently dark and devious, and we wandered about quite a time before finding the right place. It is a matter of wonder that some offices in tenements ever have any business, when they are located in dilapidated rear tenements, reached only by long, dark, narrow passages, or in one- or two-room apartments in buildings holding twenty or more families. Many proprietors seemed surprised that English-speaking investigators found them and were anxious to get us out again. One office, after much search, was found on the ground floor in the corner of a barber shop. The only entrance was by way of the shop, but when leaving we were asked to go through a narrow, dirty passage leading by a saloon, which opened invitingly off from it. At another place, after climbing several iron steps, we groped our way through two or three circuitous halls, then up a few wooden steps, to reach at last a tiny three-room apartment. The attendant was a small girl of thirteen, who deserted her dish-washing to go out on the balcony and call her mother, who was visiting in the street below. Sometimes we found that a saloon was the most prominent feature, either below or in front of the office. We were detained in the rear of one saloon, on various pretexts, for several minutes before we were shown the office, which was a little house in the rear, reached only by the family entrance to the saloon. Sometimes there was not even a sign, and in answer to our inquiries we were told: "Queer things do go on here, and such lots of people," but no one in the building claimed the license which was

issued at that place. Because of the many who loiter in idleness in these offices, they are often surrounded by gambling-dens, fortune-tellers, palmists, midwives, and other undesirable "professions," which depend on them for patronage. These are often so prominently advertised that the office may be easily overlooked.

After the very interior of the office is reached, there is frequently nothing to identify it as such. In business houses there is always some equipment, order, or system, and oftentimes the entire floor is arranged in an orderly, business-like way with desks and office fixtures. But in the tenement or apartment all rooms may be used and filled to overflowing, or it may be only a dirty kitchen or disorderly bedroom.

When so large a percentage are located in residence buildings, it follows that the great majority of them must be in living rooms. A few—less than ten per cent.—are on the ground floor, separated from the families above, or have desk room in other offices, but most of them are home industries. This identification of office and home is very close indeed. The best among them use the parlor for an office, having a desk or table, register, and telephone on one side and perhaps a piano, sewing-table, wardrobe, or other "home comforts" on the other. When they can afford two rooms, the best one is for the employer, and the kitchen, with an extra chair or bench, does for the employee. But all establishments are not so pretentious. Sometimes every one has to wait in one small, crowded room, and not always in peace. On one occasion we were

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ushered into a dark bedroom with unmade beds; a little later we were moved to the kitchen to make room for the proprietor, who was also the chambermaid, and finally back into the bedroom, and out into the hall to make room for the cook—again the proprietor—who wished to get dinner. Some places would never be taken for offices were there not women waiting and spirited arguments taking place about work and places. Early morning visits are a revelation of the close identity of home and office—proprietors and lodgers are in all stages of dressing for the day, beds are upturned, meals are being prepared, and altogether it is a most unbusiness-like place.

A few descriptions, selected at random, are typical of many tenement and apartment offices. In one dilapidated house a cobbler had a shop in front and in the yard were eight dirty dogs. The front room, which served as an office, looked like a junk shop, and certainly the amount of men's wearing apparel strewn about and the miscellaneous cooking utensils indicated a large family with most irregular hours. While we were making arrangements for a cook, the woman proprietor left several times to address the fighting dogs, in language unfit for publication. This was an American office. A second was found in a basement salesroom, where second-hand clothing was piled around in dirty, disorderly heaps, and the living room was curtained off at the back. This so-called office was used as a bedroom at night. A third was a combination baggage and living room. The proprietor was an expressman and his wife ran the office. Any left-over baggage was piled in the



office at night and utilized for beds or chairs, according to its adaptability. A fourth, literally covered with left-over bundles of waiting employees, had a table in one corner, which contained the remains of a meal, a "day-book," and advertising material. Over in another corner, two flashily dressed girls were playing the piano and singing popular songs. In a fifth the proprietor was washing, and we discussed "servants" and "places" to the time of a rhythmic "rub, rub," through clouds of steam and soapy vapor, with an occasional flap of a wet cloth for variation. The sixth was the first floor of a little two-story corner house, in a two-room apartment where the husband worked as a carpenter in one room, while the wife conducted the office in the other. The two rooms were full of children; there was very little furniture, even for living purposes, and no books or system. The seventh was in a two-room apartment, with not a thing more than was required for living purposes. The front room was a bed- and sitting-room, where the husband worked on a machine; the other a kitchen and bedroom, where the wife attended to the employment business. There was no decent place to sit down, so the woman asked us not to wait, but promised to "send a girl." Some of these home offices were so filthy and vermin-infested that we stayed no longer than was necessary.

The number of rooms range from one up to a whole house. If a house, it is usually small; if an apartment, usually a floor of from three to six rooms; if in a tenement, a one- to five-room apartment. The average is about three rooms, and seems

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high because of the custom of using all rooms, even bedrooms and kitchens, for the office.

There is a wide range and variety of equipment. Some of the best have attractive furnishings in the way of desks, files, rugs, chairs, and decorations. This is especially true in Boston, and of the best American offices in other cities. Unfortunately, this percentage is small. The most common equipment consists of a desk, or table, a few chairs, and a telephone. In many, if these were removed, there would remain a bare, or ordinary living, room. Sometimes the only equipment is a cheap day-book, a bottle of ink upon the kitchen table, and a pile of office cards upon the mantel. A parlor with an extra table for a desk and a dozen or more newspaper bundles of clothing constituted the fixtures of one office; and three bare rooms, with no other furniture than a stove, beds, tables, and bundles, describes another. About sixty per cent. of all have some equipment ranging from a simple registry to a complete office outfit. Those which supply chiefly hotel help are the best equipped and most business-like, and resemble the mercantile agencies which are described later.

The remaining forty per cent. can be said to have neither equipment nor system. The office is held in one room or all over the house, and addresses are written on any available scrap of paper—old envelopes, torn wrapping paper, the corner of a newspaper, or even upon a slate. When these memoranda are kept at all, they are found in various places—on the table or chairs, or even under the bed. Chairs, beds, and tables are used to seat

waiting applicants, and often there is not one extra article of furniture beyond that absolutely required by the family. In one there were four chairs, a kitchen table, a telephone, a dressing-case, and a large cook stove—all in one room, and the wife was cooking while the husband wrote the addresses. The second room contained two beds and piled-up bedding, which was evidently used in the kitchen at night. One day, after wandering through a very dirty, disorderly building, we entered a small courtyard. A rough, good-natured Bohemian was washing clothes, and upon the steps sat his admiring wife and three children. When asked where the office was, he tapped himself, and, smiling with pride, said: "Me the office; what you want? You want girl? I go out and find her." In another place it was a steaming kitchen, strung with lines of clothes. We asked for a girl, whereupon a Slavish woman appeared from among the lines, washing in hand, and said: "No girls, me wash day; me open office get girl, when wash done," and we had to try another day for further information. There are many which conduct business in this intermittent way, and occasionally upon the street, the proprietor taking the employer out with him until he can pick up a girl, or she is left to entertain the children while he scours the neighboring tenements for help.

The number and desirability of the waiting-rooms depend upon the size of the office. Some have an entire floor, others use the basements of houses, and others have suites of rooms for employees, but few provide adequate space. The tendency among the best offices is to abolish large waiting-rooms, and

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whenever the standard is at all high, they have separate waiting-rooms for employers and employees, and this is especially true in Boston. Among the separate nationality offices, the Swedes are most careful about this, and it is customary in some of the German and Irish ones. However, in more than one half of these, and in the majority of immigrant and negro offices, separate waiting-rooms are not provided. One Swedish office occupies two apartments on the second floor. Each has an entrance, and they are connected by an open hall in the rear. The one for the employees is a large, bare room with rows of chairs. An attempt is made to keep the men separate, but the women must pass by them on the way to the employers' room. The one for the employers presents a striking contrast. It is furnished with handsome rugs, pictures, and easy-chairs, and is a delightful place in which to wait. No girl can enter this until she is sent in for interviews. In all offices where there are separate waiting-rooms, this contrast is always found. The employers' room usually bears the sign "Ladies" or "Ladies' Entrance," and occasionally "Employers," while the other is labelled "Girls" or "Servants."

Some of the employees' rooms are both healthful and desirable, but many are dark, badly ventilated, and crowded, are arranged with little regard for comfort, and recognize no differences in rank or education. Overcrowding is found in almost every one at times, stairs, halls, and entrances—even the street, in immigrant offices—receiving the overflow. In one of these, this overflow of girls was lying out

on a small iron balcony, faces downward, peering into the fascinating street below. When one was wanted, the proprietor went out, poked the pile with his foot, and one disentangled herself and came in for inspection.

Where both male and female help are supplied, except in Boston, where much more care is taken, less than ten per cent. provide separate waiting-rooms, and they are used as general meeting-places—for making appointments or getting acquainted. This means that men and women, regardless of age, condition, or color, are often crowded together in small, dark rooms. In the winter many use them for lounging-places, and they are frequented by many rounders who are not seeking places but a good social time. In many some order is maintained, but this does not remove the necessity for separate waiting-rooms for men and women.

Notwithstanding the small number of rooms and large families, many give board and lodging. This is especially true in the negro, immigrant, separate nationality, and rarely true of the better-class American, offices. Owing to the business location and careful inspection in Boston, only about eighteen per cent. give lodging. In Philadelphia, among the negroes, ninety-two per cent. lodge, and among the whites about one half. In Chicago about one half give lodging. In New York, if the American offices are omitted, of which only fifteen per cent. give lodging, the per cent. rises to sixty. This does not include the many who find lodging-places for employees with other families in the same building or elsewhere, and so control them to almost

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the same degree, for the two—boarding-house keeper and agent—work together in “doing” the employee. In a few instances they lodge, but give no meals, except, perhaps, breakfast. In such cases employees are often allowed to bring in their own food and cook it. Some of the German ones advertise as homes rather than employment offices.

At present these lodging-house offices seem to be a necessity, and the question is one of regulation and improvement rather than abolition. They accommodate such numbers of transients, especially women who are temporarily out of work and homeless, that if they were suddenly closed, hundreds, if not thousands, would be turned out nightly with no places to which their small means would admit them, or which their unfamiliarity with the city would enable them to patronize with safety. There are few places to which an employee can go for one or two nights, if she is suddenly turned away by an irate mistress, or leaves in anger.

One of the most perplexing questions asked of settlements is: “I have a young girl for whom I wish to find work. Where can she stay for a day or two?” It is the woman in need of a place to stay for a “day or two,” for whom provision is needed. Municipal lodging-houses do not meet the need, for they are open to all women without discrimination, and the working girl temporarily out of employment needs something besides a “hang-out.”

In no city are adequate provisions made for such homeless women, and their predicament is peculiarly acute, for their friends are often household workers who cannot extend the hospitality of their rooms.

Lodging-places in offices by no means meet the demand, and certainly we could not trace many girls whom they turned away. They ask permission to leave their small belongings at the office and disappear for the night, and only too often their appearance the following day indicates that it had been a saloon, dance hall, or other undesirable place. Whether they go from choice or from necessity is a question which can be answered only when adequate means of housing them are provided.

Office lodging-houses are sometimes inferior to the office with which they are connected. One which has a fairly well-equipped room for employers and a large light waiting-room for employees has a lodging-house on the floor above with a matron in charge. An investigator was sent there to spend the night, but reported at ten o'clock that she had had enough and could not stay. The accommodations were two beds in a room and four in a bed. Six persons, some very sparingly and others decently dressed, were cooking and eating their suppers. Each had brought in what she wanted, and all were cooking and tasting each other's food at the same time. They used their fingers and made many "trades." One would "toss over" a boiled potato for a piece of meat, or a carrot for a cake, and so it went on with constant "jollyng." No drinking or male visitors were allowed, as it "invariably leads to fighting." The beds were so dirty and alive with vermin, and the prospective bedfellows so disreputable that it seemed unnecessary to hear more of their disgusting conversation and familiarity. The rates were \$1.75 for lodging and breakfast, or \$3.50 per week for full board.

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Another was one large room on the top floor of a tenement, and men were loafing all over the stairs. The room was filled with all kinds of indescribable baggage, and the window-sills and tables were full of dirty, unwashed beer glasses. Fifteen or twenty girls were kept in this room at one time. In the basement of a tenement fifteen girls were found one night on the floor, lying on old mattresses and clothing. Another, when seen in the daytime, contained a table, desk, and neat folding-beds, some shelves, upon which were Swedish postcards and views, and a large case of jewelry, for sale to the waiting girls. At night it was virtually transformed. The beds were down, and all the unplaced and homeless girls were accommodated if they wished to stay. As the number left over was sometimes small and at other times large, some nights they would be fairly comfortable and on others they were crowded in three or four deep. In apartments of two or three rooms, occupied by from two to eight people, no objections are made to crowding in lodgers. Often it is impossible to learn whether these places keep lodgers except by making night visits. On one day all the girls are given places and on another they have to house from five to ten girls. Girls are always hoping for positions and prefer to stay under bad conditions rather than to go away and pay car-fare day after day. The aim is to have them on hand and to give such the preference, and this makes the lodging-place popular.

Few give a separate bed, though if girls wish to pay extra for the remaining two thirds or three fourths of the bed, and the other prospective



occupants are willing to sleep on the floor, they can have it. Some of these places, especially German and Swedish, are clean and orderly and are preferable to many of the boarding-houses. A few discriminate, refusing undesirable people, but certainly the negro and immigrant, the less prosperous American, and many of the separate nationality offices crowd together all classes—old and young, sober and drunk, clean and unclean, good and bad, and innocent fresh girls and old hags. These lodgers go from office to office, and no matter where an employer finds a girl, she can never be sure she is not physically or morally contaminated through some such lodging-house. Most of them lodge only women, but husbands, brothers, and sons of proprietors often live in the same apartments, and occasionally the runners stay there, so there is quite enough familiarity and temptation. There are some run by women which are free from this, but curiously enough furnished-room signs are common in other parts of the building, for there are men who are always eager for chances to meet these girls. Negro offices lodge both men and women, colored and white, and the separation in many cases is but superficial. The best conditions are found in those which lodge but two or three girls at a time in their spare rooms, or who keep lists of good boarding-houses.

Offices which do not lodge attempt to meet the demand by keeping in touch with boarding-places, which they recommend. Sometimes these are run by friends who send girls out of work to the office in exchange for lodgers. Sometimes the proprietors know nothing of the places they recommend. In

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Chicago particularly they often work in conjunction with what are called "working girls' homes." Some of those visited were of such a doubtful character that they are discussed in the following chapter, and some of the boarding-places recommended but unknown to the proprietor presented conditions of which even he would have been ashamed.

Negro offices are so inferior and present such extremes that an additional note is needed. Since these supply much male help and whites are furnished in large numbers, the problem is most serious. Of all the offices, these are without doubt the least attractive and least business-like. They are nearly all in residences and tenements. In New York there are separate waiting-rooms in but two; ninety per cent. furnish lodging, and all except one or two are in living rooms. Many lodge both colored and whites. So crowded, disorderly, and dirty are they that even the most detailed description would be inadequate. In over one half of them there is no equipment whatever; in others the furniture is so scant that one hesitates even to call them homes. One was over a livery stable and next to a saloon. A short time ago it was running three lodging-houses, but was forced to give them up because of a bad reputation. Another was a laundry, where girls worked out their board; a third was a bachelors' apartment, and was used as a lodging-place, the man doing all the room-work and the cooking. A fourth claimed to make a specialty of lodging girls while under arrest. And so the instances might be multiplied, and still no adequate picture be given of the barren, dirty, tumble-down places, with their

broken windows, cluttered halls and yards, and the groups of idle, oftentimes intoxicated, applicants hanging about. There are very few which were neat and clean, and in which we waited in comfort without fear of insolence.

These descriptions apply to about seventy-five per cent. of the offices, and in them will be found some one or two if not all of the conditions which are outlined. There are about twenty-five per cent. where the conditions under which business is conducted are entirely good—where there are no lodging-places, where there is an adequate equipment and good system, and where some measure of courtesy is shown both employer and employee,—and we have attempted to make this clear throughout the chapter. But we repeat that the offices which compare favorably with any other business of similar magnitude are small in number, and until there is improvement and regulation the seventy-five per cent. will determine the status and affect the whole business of intelligence offices.

The people who run intelligence offices are usually proprietors, consisting of a man, or a woman, or a whole family. In a few an agent or manager has charge. In small offices the proprietor does most of the work, while in others he has numerous assistants. Frequently the business is conducted by the whole family, consisting of father, mother, and children. Occasionally the proprietor simply owns the business and hires others to manage, having another occupation which pays better. The attendants are usually young men, and in the immigrant offices are called runners.

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The most significant thing about these offices is that fully two thirds of them are owned or managed by women. About ten per cent. are managed by men and women together, leaving only about twenty-five per cent. to men. About one half of them secure places for both men and women, and the other half are for women.

The ages of the proprietors and managers vary. There are a few young men and women, but they form a decided minority. The business as a whole is not one conducted by hustling young business men and women, with ability and integrity, but it is more of a makeshift. Like domestic service, it is more or less identified with people who fail elsewhere, and this tends to lower the standard of the whole occupation. There is but little business ambition shown beyond the collection of fees, for pride in it as a business is more or less lacking. About twenty-five per cent. of the offices can be credited with men and women of business ability who would win success in any field.

There are so many types of proprietors and each nationality is so characteristic that no one person is typical of the whole. Excluding the best of the American and separate nationality offices, it may be said, granting exceptions, that the women are of the driving sort,—sharp, eager, business-like, and with but little education. Their manner is hard, crude, abrupt, and their conversation to the point. There is another type, the whining, simpering woman, who tells a hard-luck story in order to get a fee, or induce an employer to take an undesirable girl, and who occasionally swears at her when she

refuses. Sometimes they swing to the other extreme, and are as suave, cunning, and politic as they think the occasion demands. The men, while of about the same mental and social calibre, are more courteous. Although the attitude is assumed, nothing could exceed the cringing courtesy and attention given the employer who is well dressed or seems to have money. But the real character of the proprietors must be judged by their attitude toward both employers and employees. In some American and the negro offices, they are often insolent, even to the employers. They have a "don't-care" air, seldom rising when a patron enters, staring impertinently, and even leering if the customer asks for a girl at too small a wage or makes unreasonable requests. In one the husband was lying on the couch reading, and paid no attention to the employer, while his wife conducted the business, except to suggest in German that she better try to get a small fee because the applicant was a stranger and might not return. Sums as small as twenty-five cents are begged in this way. This indifference is partly due to the character of the people and the inequality of supply and demand, for they are always sure that if a girl is not accepted there are plenty who will want her and will take any kind of a girl.

Many of the women are fat, lazy, shabbily dressed, and extremely dirty and careless in appearance, while the men are slovenly and dirty, with a dull, listless air. In the better offices one finds good-looking, well-appearing, refined women and men, who are abrupt and business-like, but wholesome to meet, and in the recently established offices

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there is shown a decided tendency for men and women of business training and education to go into this work, though some of these when asked admitted that "the conditions are hard unless sensibilities are discarded." Too often, however, even here, well-dressed means flashily or noticeably dressed, and the clothing is often out of harmony with both surroundings and work. One German office of fair standing was attended by a woman of about sixty, attired in a black satin gown, trimmed with lace, and decorated with a profusion of jewelry. Another woman had on a long black silk skirt, the train of which was pinned up with three conspicuous pins. Others wore soiled gowns, once appropriate to the drawing-room. Paint, powder, dyed hair, and traces of dissipation are common, and in immigrant offices the scarcity of apparel is noteworthy. Frequently the proprietor's attention is divided between the transaction of business and the care of children, the order being written with one hand, while the other is used to quiet a baby, the conversation in the meantime being interspersed with soothing remarks to the baby.

Where a whole family runs the office, there seems to be no exact division of labor. When an employer attempts to leave without paying a fee, they all begin to talk at once—either entreating or discussing means by which they can secure it, sometimes ending in a quarrel. A mother and son had a most animated discussion in a tongue they thought unintelligible, over the amount they believed they could "get out of her," the son insisting she "ain't worth as much as she looks." The mother was a

small dark Jewess of bad expression, dressed in a dirty cotton wrapper, and had a continuous wink with which she tried to beguile confidence. In negro offices the proprietors who seemed at all attractive were large, pleasant-mannered women, neat in dress; but more often they were dirty, dissipated, loud in manner, and dressed in the gaudiest of colors, with an abundance of cheap jewelry. Instead of cast-off finery, however, the preferred style of dress seemed to be brilliant cotton wrappers.

Except the few who appeared to be of the finer type of business women and men, or to belong to old or well-bred families, certainly the intelligence office does not command the best business ability, or the best trained or even fairly cultured among men and women. There are few enterprises which exert so wide an influence and are so thronged with people where the proprietors, having both means and opportunity, are so indifferent to their own appearance and to the conditions of their offices and homes.

Except in Boston, there were a number of licensed offices which could not be found, just as there were many which were found but not licensed. In New York this number was eighty-one. During the year some had failed and others had moved and could not be traced. Occasionally licenses had been renewed for some reason when the people had been out of business for over a year. Some proprietors had purposely given the wrong addresses, knowing that they could not be traced, and if accidentally found could plead that they had moved since taking out the license. So careless was the issuance of li-

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censes in New York that one address would have been located in the middle of the East River, since it was several numbers higher than any ever recorded on that street. Others were vacant lots upon which there had been no buildings for years.

At first thought an unfindable office seemed to be a source of but little information, but some significant facts resulted from visits to the deserted places. These were gathered from postmen, neighbors, and others. Some had been located over saloons, and most of them had been in apartments and tenements. The reasons given by the neighbors for their closing were of interest. For example: "Not paying rent," "fighting and keeping disorderly places," "closed up by the police," "dispossessed," "run by a midwife and never did much business, used that sign as a blind," "bad reputation and neighbors got them out," "afraid of arrest," and "money and creditors bothered so they went to a safer place." One janitor asked us if we were after money, and when we hesitated said: "Well, there's lots of them come here for that; guess you'll never get out of an empty house what they did n't out of a full one." One proprietor was watched and "had to move because he got so much mail"; another was "abroad getting help for the fall trade"; a third had "closed up and gone to the country for the summer"; and a fourth "had made a fortune and retired." This was gossip of neighbors and must be accepted as such.

This description is intended to cover the conditions and surroundings of offices, while subsequent chapters deal with their methods and moral significance.



## CHAPTER III

### BUSINESS CONDITIONS AND METHODS

Four sources of information : Personal experience in offices ; conversations with waiting employees, and their replies to printed schedules of questions ; conversations with waiting employers, and 350 replies from them to printed schedules of questions ; statements of office agents ; court records, complaints, and decisions.

THE methods described comprise what has been learned of the way in which offices conduct their business,—the secret of their management and success. There are three grades of offices, not based upon their size or equipment, but upon their attitude toward their patrons. In the first class fall those which have an interest in the business other than financial, such as Exchanges, Young Women's Christian Associations, and those which are lenient or just toward patrons. Roughly estimated, these comprise about one sixth of the entire number. They have good equipment and system and do not resort to most of the methods which are outlined here. The second class includes those which live within the letter rather than the spirit of the law, and resort only to the forms of fraud which are less glaring. In many cases they are comparatively honest, fraud being an occasional, rather than a regular, thing. They have equipment and some degree of

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m. The third class, which includes fully more two thirds of all offices, practise in part or in the methods outlined. Immigrant, negro, and shabby offices are found in all of these grades, a shabby office may be much more honest than a respectable one.

A characteristic of all offices is the small amount of capital required. In the first-grade offices there are usually two or more rooms, so that employers and employees are separated; registers are kept; there is a desk, telephone, and reference blanks. In the second class there may be one or two waiting-rooms; there may be a register; but there are rarely reference blanks. In the third class, registers are conspicuously absent, crowded living-rooms are the rule, and the system is practically out of the question. Notwithstanding all the exceptions, it still remains true that offices are too often places where a fee is paid, or some signal ability on the part of the agent, rather than a standing room for interviews. They are successful because employers and employees are brought into contact from each other, and, having no means of contact except advertising, compete for this space. Those which have reputable agents in the field do something more than mere office work, but unfortunately the most active agents are often connected with questionable offices. The prevailing rule, especially in the last named class, is to rely upon application, dropping in, or to resort to trickery rather than to rely upon business skill and foresight. Our conclusion is that in intelligence offices there are more of a business system and business method than in almost any other business.

Although so many offices are makeshifts, in the majority there is no other source of income. In a few instances the employment business is used to supplement a small income, as from a pension or small property. In some of the offices run by men and women together, where women have other occupations, they are such as washing, sewing, janitress work, or other unskilled labor. Side occupations for men usually fit in well with the office, such as keeping a saloon which the waiting employees can patronize, running a steamship or railway agency where they can buy tickets, or selling small articles which are wanted by employees.

It is difficult to estimate how well offices pay, for the competition is keen. On the whole, with a fair amount of energy and attention, they appear to yield good returns. In some there is such a poor quality of ability that they cannot possibly return much of a profit, and many immigrant offices claim they can scarcely pay expenses.

The chief sources of income are fees and board and lodging. Fees are common to all private intelligence offices, and may be a varying price for each order filled, a percentage of the wage, a gift, or a subscription for a month or year. In addition to board and lodging, storage of and express on baggage are sometimes a source of income. No office will give its earning power, but by running advertisements, and through some interviews where we offered to purchase offices, we found that the prices asked in a medium-sized office ranged from \$500 to \$3000. The replies to our advertisements for ownership and partnership were not numerous, and none

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of the larger ones offered to sell, though we represented that we had both money and experience to put into the business. In Boston another investigator estimated that with 119 offices there were 600,000 applications annually. In St. Louis and Kansas City, where the facts were obtained by an official investigation by the State Department, they reported that the former had six offices and 100,000 applications annually; and the latter twelve offices and 88,000 applications. Of 537 replies from employers, thirty-four per cent. said they used intelligence offices. There are no statistics for New York and Chicago, but since New York has four times as many as Boston, the number of applications must reach millions.

These were applications for work, and represent only a part of the fees, since both employers and employees are usually charged. Each position filled averages from two to four dollars. One agent states—and observation and reports seem to justify the statement—that the business is worth thirty thousand dollars. Frequently we found people who had retired and were living upon their profits; others were property holders, and some found it possible to close their offices for the summer and frequent popular resorts, or to go abroad to secure girls. The cry that there is no money in the business may be true in some instances, but as a rule it is a fair investment.

There are in New York and Chicago at least twenty-five per cent. more offices than are required for the amount of business. It follows, then, that many of them must resort to questionable methods.

These are both ingenious and numerous, and while not true of all, are to be found in some degree in most of the second- and third-class offices. For instance, a girl is sent to a place upon the understanding that she will remain only until they send for her. One employer found that six came to her with this understanding. Proprietors have asked us to wait while they telephoned or went to homes and brought girls back for interviews. Then they have the audacity to send the employer notice that they understand she is without a girl and they have another girl for another fee. One girl said she had been placed ten times in one year, netting the office twenty dollars in fees, for it received a percentage of the wage each time, and a neat sum for lodging until placed again. If the employer who lost her returned to the same office for other girls, there were additional fees. Girls urged us to follow this plan, saying: "You can't save much, but it's gay changing." While we were waiting in one place a woman who had held a position for four years came in. She was held up to ridicule before a roomful of people by the agent, who said: "You are a pretty paying subject to come to us for a job once in four years—the idea!"

There is still a simpler method: A man comes to a city, establishes an office, advertises in some attractive way, secures a good number of fees from employees, then disappears, having made no attempt whatever to provide positions. He then tries the same scheme in some other city where he is not known, making seventy-five to five hundred dollars in each one. In other instances no office is opened,

but some enterprising individual advertises in an attractive way, and receives mail orders at the newspaper office. These contain small sums from people who hope to get work in a more genteel way than through a public office. Some others are nothing more than fences. They harbor petty thieves, whom they send out in the guise of employees. They remain overnight and carry off all the small articles of value, which they bring to the office, which disposes of them without arousing suspicion, gives the girl a liberal percentage, and protects her. She is then recommended for another place. One office in Chicago has a more elaborate plan. A house is "spotted," the name secured, and an employee is sent up with a card which says that Mrs. B—— at that address requested a maid from that office. She goes at a time when the lady is likely to be out or cannot see her, her object being to stay in the house and chat with the other employees. Naturally, a maid who believes some one has come for her place before she has been notified to leave wants to find out all she can and is more or less friendly. When the lady of the house appears later and says she has ordered no maid, the new maid assures her it is a "mistake in number, due to the telephone, no doubt." But when she leaves she takes with her a diagram of the house, and the required information about the location and fastenings of windows, the kind of lock to be picked, the location of silver, etc. Later the office sends men to finish up the task of looting the house, or furnishes crooks with a tip for which they pay well; and she is free for other scout work. Even when

offices do not encourage robbery they do not always suppress it. One employer found one of her maids with her trunk half full of silver and linen. She notified the proprietor of a very fashionable office who had sent her the girl. A few days later, upon calling on a friend, this maid opened the door, having been sent there by the same office. Her trunk was again examined and silver found. Hotels are sometimes in collusion with offices. Girls are sent to hotels with the understanding that they are to be found unsatisfactory and room made for others at the end of a week or two. The hotel may pay them for the week or refuse; in the latter case it receives their labor in addition to the office commission. Girls never suspecting the duplicity continue to patronize the office. The practice in so many offices of taking the fees and never making an effort to secure places is too common to need more than a reference here.

Offices which have a steamship and railway business encourage girls to leave money with them to pay for transportation of friends and relatives in small towns or abroad. They act as bankers, and then send the tickets when the amount covers the fare. In this way they make a good commission, as well as secure the new girl for a patron. One allows girls whom it has placed to meet friends in the office evenings and Sundays. No fee is charged, but "gifts are very welcome."

Such schemes for increasing profit will flourish when competition is keen and where there are no regulations. In Boston, close police surveillance and refusal of the city to increase the number of licenses

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certainly prevent gross frauds; in Chicago, the high license has crowded out some. In New York, during the Low administration, the prosecution of some decreased the more open frauds. In Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia, negro offices resort universally to deceptions, and many immigrant offices are responsible.

If there are questionable sources of profit, there is also a small question of graft, especially when offices are connected with saloons and gambling dens; and undoubtedly the disorderly places are protected. It is inconceivable, in view of the open way in which some offices are run, that the average policeman should not learn something of the immorality and frauds. Before the Low administration in New York (and at present in Chicago and Philadelphia), it was the custom to have the neighborhood policeman, or a friend, renew the license for a fee. Thus no questions were asked, and officials never saw the applicant or the kind of place he kept.

The charging of fees has caused more legislation and has been subject to more abuse than any other feature. In New York and Philadelphia, employers' fees average \$2 for housemaids and \$3 for cooks. In Chicago the law restricts it to \$2 and in Boston to 75 cents and \$1, for all positions paying under \$4 per week, though more is often charged. It is usually good for a period of from one to three months, or until an employer is suited.

Fees are good for varying periods. Those good for several months have some disadvantages. The employer is told that the fee is good for two months, and that she can have all the girls she wants until



one suits her. In answer to the question how many girls were sent for one fee, the replies from employers indicated that one was the usual number, though some said two or three or even five. After one or two incompetents, employers are impatient and try elsewhere. Even granting that the office honestly tries to give satisfaction the first time, they may send a cook whom for some reason she cannot keep, or who will not stay, and a demand is made for a second cook for the same fee. Now the office may do one of three things,—it may select another girl who will suit, but the chances are frequently against this. It has the fee, and it is probably spent. It has forgotten the employer's particular request, and the supply of cooks is short. It reasons: Why should it send the only good cook it has, when in line stands another employer whose three dollars have not yet been paid? The chances are that the cook goes to the one from whom the fee has not yet been collected. Secondly, it may delay. This is a plan simply to tire out the employer and force her to go elsewhere, or pay extra. The office does not fear losing a good patron, for she receives much the same treatment in others, and the demand so far exceeds the supply that it is rarely a question of enough employers. The third plan is more difficult to detect, but is none the less common. These offices have a number of "hangers-on"—women who take places for a week or two to get a little money, and then spend it. These are useful. Even though they hold a place but a few days, each one placed means a fee. After the first attempt to send a desirable girl, and sometimes at the beginning, the

office sends these "stool pigeons," one after another, and when an employer complains the answer is, "We have sent *so many girls*—there must be something wrong with the house," or, "The employer was too difficult to please," which gives the impression of honest service. In Chicago, one girl said she stayed one night in each place and got from fifty cents to one dollar a night. It was her customary business. Some have a good-looking girl—she is engaged and the fee paid, then she refuses to go, or goes and refuses to stay. The office appears to be guiltless, but she is really employed by them for this purpose. One had a girl registered and learned that she had secured a position. The agent went to the employer and tried to collect a fee, saying: "You are rich and can afford to pay a poor woman for such a good servant." It is true that offices cannot always secure competent help, and frequently send the best they have, but too often there is a method in sending incompetents. There seems to be no other explanation, when girls arrive directly from an office so intoxicated that it must have known it; when chambermaids and waitresses are sent when cooks are ordered; when negroes appear, though whites are distinctly specified; when Catholics arrive in place of Protestants; and incompetents for incompetents—no end. This is due to carelessness when employers have been careful in their instructions.

Fees good for a length of time encourage short service. The employer discharges an employee more readily, and girls think they can leave on slight provocation, for a new girl or position costs nothing. Such a system encourages a bonus. When a fee is

good for two months and an employee is not secured, the employer is tempted to add a small amount, just for a "little special attention." Fees are really larger than they seem; three dollars for three months appears more of a bargain than two dollars for one employee; but it amounts to much the same thing in the end, and is an adroit way of securing more fees. A fee for each employee, to be refunded unless she remains a specified time, appears to work less of a hardship.

A few, chiefly those which supply hotels and other large establishments, charge by the season, the rate being \$10 to \$25. Others have subscriptions or annual accounts. Some do not charge large employers of help, such as hotels, for the reasons that girls prefer to go there and hotels advertise them. Some give a reduction when an employer takes more than one employee, as two maids for \$5. In a number of them, fees depend upon the degree of prosperity which an applicant shows and upon the location of the home, for they frankly said that "higher rates are charged those living in fashionable neighborhoods"; and different assistants have been given different rates in the same places, presumably for this reason. Except where regulated by law, there is no uniform standard. The charge may be as low as 50 cents or as high as \$5, but they rarely charge the employer a percentage of the wage—it is usually a specified amount. Germans sometimes have a little lower rate, and Swedes more season rates. Strangely enough, immigrant and negro offices which furnish so much unskilled help charge a high, oftentimes an exorbitant, rate. Employers'

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fees are usually payable at the time of leaving with the girl, or when she is sent to the home and engaged.

The testimony of employers and our experience are decidedly against the belief that offices refund fees. We never succeeded in getting one back, though we sometimes requested them when we were not offered positions. Less than five per cent. of the employers who answered our queries were successful. Many said they had made the attempt and failed, while others considered it useless. In all of the cities the law compels the return of the fees under certain circumstances. In Boston complaints can be made to any policeman and fees are refunded in many cases. They are payable only when positions are offered. This law is evaded quite successfully with employees as this testimony shows:

"After waiting for nearly a week and paying \$1, I was sent to a place, after I had signed a paper I thought concluded our agreement. When my first week was up, the manager of the restaurant tore my pay envelope open before my eyes and took out half of my wages and said he would have to retain it for the intelligence-office keeper. I objected, but he said it was an agreement that was made between the office and myself. So, sooner than lose my job, with a foot of snow on the ground and five little ones at home, I thought I would stand it. Before the next week was up I was discharged because an old hand was coming back. I returned to the office, but could not get a cent returned."

In Philadelphia, no one knows where to complain. In New York, it must be made to the Bureau of

Licenses, and in Chicago to the free employment agencies. The sums lost are usually small, and complaints involve much time. Employers think it is a small matter, so the office is comparatively safe. In cases where employers admitted demanding the fee, they usually added, "as a matter of principle," indicating that otherwise they considered it a "small" thing to do.

Employees' fees are somewhat different. The amount is lower, ranging from 50 cents to \$2, and averaging about \$1, good for one or more months. Except in Boston, they are payable preferably when girls enter the office, and almost invariably before they are sent out to a place. Some Swedish, German, and other offices are more lenient in the collection of fees and will wait until a girl has earned something, but usually have an agreement that the employer shall pay it out of the first week's wage. Employees, as a rule, get but little attention unless they pay, and in many offices are not even permitted to wait, the attendants saying: "This place is crowded"; "All who ain't paid can get out"; "This is no day hotel." When we refused to pay, we sometimes left our addresses. The next day we received a post-card saying that a position was open. We would go, only to find that it had "just been filled," and that it would have been ours if our fee had been paid. We often paid the fee, and then frequently received no cards. Sometimes employees pay a fee and wait half a day. If they go out a few minutes to lunch, when they return the agent says: "We could have placed you—you must stay here if you want a place." If any impatience

is shown—he repeats this and makes it an excuse for keeping the fee. Other offices make an appointment for the next morning—taking the fee. If the applicant is five or ten minutes late, they say: “You have missed your appointment—the place is filled,” and if she is early or on time, they send in some one else, whose fee they want, and then say, “The lady did n’t come.” We went into offices resolved that we would not pay; but there was something in the very atmosphere which impelled us to part with our money. Employees were joking, giving each other “the glad hand,” telling stories, and bestowing advice; well-dressed and gracious employers were constantly departing with girls; we were made welcome and assured it was a good place; and the clerks argued and promised. It was a game of chance, and unconsciously we got into the spirit of it and thought we could win out; and before we realized it we were “Mary Watson,” candidate for a chambermaid’s place, wages nothing less than \$18, experience unlimited, references to order, and—minus \$1.

Some charge but one fee and others charge a registration fee of from 10 cents to \$1 in addition. This they claim is to cover incidental expenses, leaving the employment fee for clear profit. It is commonly a percentage fee, and is usually ten per cent. of the first month’s wage. On such a basis it may reach \$5. In rare instances the entire first week’s salary is asked. Negro and immigrant offices, and occasionally others, have a system of gifts. We were told repeatedly as employers that employees were charged nothing. Then we sent some girls for places and found that the office demanded a gift,

and upon its value often depended the kind of position offered. This gift is money or any other valuable. Sometimes a girl leaves some ornament, intending to redeem it. Naturally, if it is of value, the office is not interested in her success, and if she is unable to "make good" it claims the article by default. She is told that it is through her own fault that she has lost her place, or received none, and she is accused of being ungrateful. This subterfuge of gifts has been so profitable that at least one State has prohibited them. Some offices also make small loans to employees and receive valuable pledges. They are in no hurry to get a "greenie" work under such circumstances.

The length of time which an applicant must wait for a position after paying her fee varies with her demands and competency, the season, and with the inclination of the office to place her. Sometimes she is sent out immediately, and again she waits for days. If an applicant is fairly satisfactory and a position is not offered within three days, it is usually safe to assume that the new arrivals are receiving attention. The office sometimes creates an impression of good intentions by sending employees to a place which it knows has already been filled. Even under such circumstances they put her at the end of the list, where she again waits her turn. One employee had half a dozen fees running in as many offices, and had been without a position for a week, owing to this apparently fair routine method—often the only evidence of system. Sometimes there is a pretense of refunding fees. When an applicant calls, the office takes the address and promises to send the

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fee by mail, hoping the applicant will not reappear. Case after case has been called to our attention of fees paid and no satisfaction given, and women go repeatedly for work or a return of their money. One poor woman paid three dollars for a position as janitress and never received even the offer of a place, nor could she recover the money, as no receipt had been given her. Receipts are required in all cities, but when given they sometimes boldly state that the office does not guarantee a position, or that the fee is paid for office privileges, not for positions. Occasionally when applicants return for fees, for which receipts have been given, the office asks to see them, grabs them, refuses to return them and then laughs at the applicant. Seventy names were taken from the registry of one office in St. Louis; there were forty-seven replies, and all declared that they had received no positions for the fees. In the same city, the prosecuting attorney is authority for the statement that out of sixteen agencies only one had not had a charge of fraud made against it within the year. In one trial it appeared that two offices alone had "done" the unemployed out of some six thousand dollars in one year. One of the most fashionable offices in New York takes fees, and at the end of the week tells the girls it is their own fault that they have no positions, for they are too homely, and it refuses to refund the money, saying: "We cannot help the fad of employers in wanting good-looking waitresses." Perhaps this practice of taking fees from all classes and then encouraging the old or otherwise undesirable to wait day after day accounts for the listless atmosphere in offices. Certainly we



have been in but few places where we have seen so much indolence, discontent, and despair, but of course it must be remembered that many are homeless as well as jobless.

As a general rule we have seen no offices requiring an advance fee which we could recommend as free from all frauds, and employers' experiences substantiate our statement. Applicants testify that those charging advance fees are the least satisfactory.

There is one fact which is true of almost every office: they over-register and over-promise. Even the most reputable seldom turn away a patron. Most of them are willing to accept the fee, and where employees are unwilling to pay they make all kinds of extravagant promises. In a few instances they refused our orders, saying they could barely supply their own trade; but they rarely refused an employee, even when she seemed a doubtful investment. The formula is, "Come back in an hour," or, "To-morrow,—we will have something for you."

The payment of fees is an absolute prerequisite—but it by no means follows that the help supplied is always satisfactory. One employer says that the list of offices sending her unsatisfactory help is "as long as Don Giovanni's loves"; another declares she has had no trouble; and there are all degrees between these two extremes. Thirty per cent. of the employers answering the blanks declared that offices were not satisfactory and the remainder that they were. This would seem to favor the offices; but fully one half of the seventy per cent. qualified their replies by such statements as, "yes and no,"

“reasonably so,” “after many trials,” “fair,” “better than none.” Unquestionably, offices do make great efforts to send satisfactory girls; but lack of system, imperfect knowledge of employees, lack of frankness, general hurry-up method of doing things, and failure to study the situation and sources of supply, make these attempts only fairly successful. Only the best offices are included in this paragraph on satisfactory help, since no attempt was made to secure returns from the patrons of negro, immigrant, and second-rate offices.

In the main, the charges against the offices are that they send no help at all, and fill positions carelessly. One employer in the country asked for a laundress, and a waitress was sent. The girl had no experience in laundry work, but had to stay till she had earned enough to return. A further charge is that they vouch for dishonest and immoral girls, when they do not know them at all, or else know the truth.

If incompetency is the most serious grievance of the employer, a chief source of this trouble are the references. In less than one per cent. of the cases are they required from the employers. Now think what this means! In ninety-nine per cent. of the offices which furnish household and hotel help, no questions are asked except about wages, hours, and address; and many do not require the last if a girl is taken at once. In the hurry of business they take little thought of where the girl goes, and many are utterly indifferent, even when their suspicions are aroused, as when saloons, men's club-houses, etc., are specified. In only three instances, when asking

for girls for a men's club-house, were we met by questions, and then the attendants said apologetically, "We have some nice girls whom we ought to protect"; and, "Far too many girls are taken out of the city and never heard from again." In one instance, we gave an order for six chambermaids for a men's club-house on Long Island. Aside from the wages and amount and kind of work, no other particulars were given. An assistant later was in the same place and was asked to take one of these places, and was assured that "we know the place well and it is all right."

There are all shades of opinion upon references for employees. These are of two kinds—written and personal. Personal references are given directly by one employer to another through correspondence, telephone, or visits. The written reference is ordinarily a letter, carried by the employee, but it may be a statement returnable to the office by mail in answer to questions. These are called investigated references and are kept on file, but unfortunately this method is used by but few offices. References may also be bonded, in which case the office receives a considerable fee for "making it good." This is, however, rare.

Employees do not favor them, and some take the request as an insult. One girl replied: "I don't need any. I don't have to get down on my knees and say 'Please take me,' for there are plenty who will anyhow, and I'm as good as any of them." But the majority of employers prefer references, although many admit that they are often a mere matter of form. Out of 350 replies, 34 per cent.

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did not find them satisfactory. Of the 66 per cent. who did, almost all qualified their statements by: "fairly so," at some offices, "moderately," "comparatively," "usually," "generally," "only for honesty," "better than none," "tolerably so," "indifferently so," "partly," and "sufficiently." Very few answered the question with "always." Many discriminated against written, but approved highly of personal, references, and were willing to give the time for them. Others accepted written references, but tried to supplement this knowledge in other ways.

The majority of offices detest to bother with them and use them only because so many employers insist. The best offices of all grades require them in some form, but are willing to take employees in the hope of persuading employers to accept them without this credential. Of course, immigrant and negro offices cannot be expected to furnish them. They include among their reasons: "not asked," "nobody expects much of negroes," "we import girls, and they bring none," "we don't care for patrons who want them," "too hard to get girls," and "can get places without them." Investigation of references seems to be a proper function of the office, but it cannot be held fully responsible. It alleges that employees write their own references, that some people make a living by writing them, and that employers are not to be relied upon.

Offices may well complain that they are imposed upon, but certainly they go and do likewise. We started out with references that were purposely bad, stating clearly our incompetency or immorality. In

some places they changed the text, in others they gave us new ones, or we were sent to people who were "not too particular." Sometimes the attendant simply said: "She is all right, we have seen her reference." So they had, but the employer would often have been surprised at the contents. They insist that they investigate references, when they know nothing about them. They recommend a cook as a treasure, when they know she is not fit to prepare a meal for three to eat. They encourage employees to bring any kind of references, so that they can say they have them. If employers insist upon seeing them they reply: "It is lost," or "mis-laid." They allow employees to use old references, changing the dates, and sometimes steal especially valuable ones from waiting employees. An employer, when giving a written reference, never knows who will use it as a passport. Thoroughly respectable girls when they take new positions will lend, give away, or sell their references, trusting to get others from their new places; and we have been offered them by people who could not possibly have known anything of our honesty. We have been told we were "too good-looking to let go," and have been offered, without extra charge, references which had been bought up or collected. One proprietor turned a girl out because she would not let her take her references in to show for another girl who had none.

The whole letter-reference system is a series of impositions, beginning with the employer. They give them to get rid of girls, and refuse them in order to keep them; they refuse them out of pique,

or give them for purely sympathetic reasons. The actual testimony of some of the largest employers shows how they regard them. To the question, "Upon what ground would you refuse them?" they reply: Dishonesty, 89; intoxication, 54; immorality, 26; impudence, 22; and incompetency, 20. Others receiving from three to ten votes were: "Unreliability," "carelessness," "glaring faults," "untidiness," "deficient or bad character," "deceit and lying," "bad habits," "bad temper," "quarrelsome," "serious offences," "repeated neglect," "grumblesome," and "idleness." Where but one ground was given, dishonesty was most frequent; where two, dishonesty and intemperance; where three, dishonesty, intemperance, and immorality; where four, incompetency, dishonesty, intemperance, and insolence.

This lack of standard is not all of the problem. When given, they are often misleading. But two state that they refuse them on all grounds and that they insist upon private interviews; four never refuse for any cause; some tell all the good points and are silent on the bad; others mention only deception or intemperance, but not other faults; others refuse only when it is impossible to speak well of the employee, or give them, but encourage personal interviews, saying that they will state the truth in an interview, but not in writing. Some think it their duty to tell faults only when questioned, and are careful not to over-praise.

When this is the practice of the best and largest employers, what must be the truth for the whole mass? All the evidence tends to show that the

tendency is to avoid specific statements, that half truths are stated, vital information is neglected, spite and prejudice are vented, and opinions and idiosyncrasies are expressed, rather than facts stated. They range from the employer who refuses a reference because a girl deceives her about something which she has no right to know, to the one who gives a petty thief or an habitual intoxicant a clean bill. Certainly not the office, but this lack of accepted standards and honesty is partly responsible for some of the incompetent and immoral women who stay in the ranks of household workers.

The only remedies seem to be: An educational movement to arouse employers to their sense of obligation and to secure uniformity of standards; that employees remain at least three months before they are given a reference; that written references, in the shape of letters, carried by employees be abolished and some prescribed form adopted containing a description of the employee to prevent exchanges, and the essential questions to be answered; that personal references be encouraged; and that employers insist upon offices using blanks returnable by mail. If office fees depended more upon the grade of employees, references might be more trustworthy. When no references are required, the office has no responsibility and can afford to furnish employees for less, but where they are carefully investigated it is entitled to a larger fee, though it is always its duty to keep out "rounders" and other objectionable characters. It is a grave question whether this whole matter of references should not be left to employers and employees, but it is suscep-

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tible to such a fine office system that it is well worth working out.

The subject of board and lodging is discussed at length in the preceding chapter, but is not emphasized there as a distinct source of gain. The rates depend somewhat upon circumstances, as when girls have money they are charged more. Ten cents a meal and 20 cents a night are about the lowest; 50 to 75 cents a day is the average; and weekly rates range from \$2 to \$4, occasionally reaching \$5. Chicago shows a slightly lower rate, and the rates in the working-girls' homes, with which they co-operate, range from \$1.50 to \$4, with privileges of the kitchen or with board. The advantages to the office are: additional income, having employees on hand when orders come in, and control of the patronage of both the employee and her friends. To make these lodging-houses pay, offices place girls and then induce them to leave on the promise of a better place. Then they find that the place "has just been filled" (what a multitude of sins that phrase covers!) and they must wait for another place, which is not ready until they are out of money. In this way, during the year a skilful office manages to secure the lion's share of a girl's wages.

Many believe that the wage rate is almost entirely determined by the inequality of demand and supply. But what supply exists is controlled, or at least directed, by the offices. This is especially true where a percentage fee is charged. Some never have an employee for just the wage an employer wishes to pay, but have plenty for fifty cents or one



dollar higher, just enough more so that the employer feels "small" unless she yields. Offices are so largely wage brokers that many girls name no regular wage, but leave it to the office to get as much as it can. One employer says that "unless you are *quite* decided as to what you wish to pay you will find yourself paying more without realizing why." A few refuse to have anything to do with the question of wages, leaving it entirely to the parties to the contract, but offices which do act as wage brokers so spoil the employees that when they go to the other places their demands are so unreasonable that they are often turned away.

The crowded waiting-rooms of many offices certainly have an influence upon the permanency of contracts, for in ninety per cent. they are publicly made. This means that it is in the presence of many curious, critical, and often railing listeners. Promises are made which are broken as soon as the girl is in her position. Many misunderstandings arise, due solely to the fact that each is trying to make a good impression before others. Mrs. A—— does not wish Mrs. B——, sitting next to her, to know how little she pays a maid, so she offers a sum she cannot afford and later assures the girl it is a mistake; or she wishes her neighbor to believe she gives unusual privileges and makes an attractive proposal, which she later retrenches on all sides. A girl will often refuse to yield a minor point because she knows her listening "pals" will guy her, or accuse her of having a "weak back" or "broken spirit." The employer is thus tempted to make big promises, and the employee to make unreason-

able demands, largely due to the desire to "show off" before these third parties. One room in Boston, about forty by forty, contained seventy-five or one hundred people, and at least a dozen people listened to the terms of a contract we made. Some encouraged the girls by looks and gestures, while others tried to attract our attention and secure the chance. Questions are frequently asked by employers which are humiliating in the presence of others, but which do not necessarily arouse resentment when asked privately. Under these circumstances an employee may be impertinent or may prevaricate simply to preserve her dignity or pride. It is useless to beg this question by attributing to employees different sensibilities from those of employers. There are, of course, employees of dull sensibilities to whom nothing much matters, but this cannot be called a characteristic of employees alone. We have heard employees say they would have taken the position had it not been for what others present thought and said. As one means of decreasing the number of misunderstood and broken contracts, employers should insist upon private interviews.

The success of any office depends upon its ability to secure employees. Advertising and recommendation by other patrons are found quite sufficient to secure employers, but for employees other means are necessary. Many offices rely on cards, which they depend upon their patrons to distribute; a few issue announcements and circulars; and in all cities but Boston they use public signs and placards. Many immigrants and others tell us that they walk miles, "just looking for these signs." These are

sometimes misleading. One reads, "Industrial Home." When questioned, the proprietor said it was an inducement to attract customers, and that she would like to train girls, and when asked what she would teach them she said: "Well, if they were cooks I would expect to learn more than I taught." Some proprietors visit cheap lodging-houses and pay the keepers fifty cents or a dollar for every girl they furnish; or they exchange, sending girls there to board. For the immigrant and negro the boarding-house is the crux of the whole situation, especially in New York and Philadelphia, and so close is the relation that any reform must include them. Others do not scruple to hold up girls on the street and induce them to come to the agency. A few have the endorsement of mission houses and pastors. Icemen, grocers, and market men are pressed into service. They are usually friends of the office-keepers; so when they go into homes why should they not become acquainted with girls, make them dissatisfied by telling them what the office will do, or what they have seen in other homes, and then, for a small commission, report to the office that at such numbers there are good girls. Later the agent makes their acquaintance, and employers wonder why their girls have left. One Swedish office, notorious for taking away girls whom it has placed, urges them to attend church and advances the necessary money for clothes. In this way it secures an additional hold on the girl and the endorsement of the church for its work. Some place girls where there are other servants, with the understanding that they are to create dissatisfaction and

secure them for the office. In Philadelphia there is an exchange system. Girls are sent to places like Atlantic City during the summer on condition that they will be returned during the winter. There are other interesting, but not general, methods. For instance, girls are sent to offices by family physicians, who pick them up in the course of practice; male relatives and friends who work in factories induce some to go to the office, and a few offices offer free lodging to girls who are out of work. This attracts many who do not see that the large fees cover their lodging. Others give girls a commission or reduction for bringing in friends, and a few, especially Germans, Irish, and Swedes, are in touch with schools and send pupils to resorts and hotels during the summer.

The methods, however, upon which offices chiefly rely are advertising and importation. The former is used more by the better-class offices and the latter by the immigrant offices. Answering advertisements in newspapers is much more common than advertising and is, of course, cheaper. Some clip offers of places and give these to applicants, who often go only to find the places filled. Sometimes employees pay car-fares for half a dozen such orders in a day, not knowing they are advertisements. Some offices run blind advertisements, and when applicants answer them they find an employment office. Others do a mail-order business and make their living off the small sums they require sent by mail. Others run general advertisements from day to day, such as "Wanted, chambermaids, cooks," etc., ending with some attractive inducement. They may or

may not have these positions ready, but the object is to attract large numbers of girls when they have no definite orders and secure registration fees. A few, as in Boston, include an advertisement for the regular fee, while others often charge extra for this and insist upon its insertion. Thoughtful employers who think they are placing their employees by advertising, "Lady leaving city wishes to place maid," sometimes find they have been carried off by such an office.

We have been asked so often for the relative merits of offices and advertising that we have made a special inquiry into the subject and find that it varies in the different cities. In Boston the agencies almost invariably advertise, so that the chances for employment by either method are about even. In Chicago employers insist that they receive better employees from offices and that advertisements are unsatisfactory. In New York, from both employers' and employees' point of view, advertisements are rather more satisfactory, and the replies to the question, "Do you use advertisements, and are they satisfactory?" show that one fourth find them satisfactory and one third do not, and the remainder state that they answer only employers' advertisements for placing employees and that they are universally satisfactory, because they insure personal interviews with present employers. When a preference is expressed, it is decidedly in favor of advertising, though many said: "No girls are to be had anyway, so we do both." The employers' objections to answering advertisements include: "When we answer them we are too late and find the girls have

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just taken a place," "We cannot always find the address," "Requires more exertion than going to an office," "When they fail to keep engagements no one is responsible," "Are a waste of time," "Unwilling to visit the places from which they advertise," "Much more satisfactory to advertise than to answer them," "Too great a risk taking a girl on an advertisement," "References are often forged," "Advertisements are sometimes blind and we spend much time, only to find out they are not what we want." Their objections to advertising were such as: "It makes one's house a private intelligence office," and "Brings in all sorts and conditions of girls." On the other hand, they give as advantages that "Large fees are avoided," "Girls are obtained more quickly and are free from the pernicious influence and training of offices." Some employers believe that the intervention of such a middle man is disastrous.

Employees favor advertising for these reasons: Many believe that "no sober, competent, respectable girl goes to a public office if she has friends or a home from which to advertise"; "ladies who look up a girl are particular and we get into good houses, and our fellow-servants are our own class"; as employees "we are better protected if the employer knows we have respectable friends and a home to receive us"; it "is cheaper and quicker than to pay big fees and wait in offices"; and that "the familiarity and tone of the conversations in offices are objectionable." Others said: "Some good girls are compelled to frequent offices, because they have not presentable homes, are strangers in the city, or

have had family troubles." In our own experience as advertisers we received many replies which seemed to indicate that a good class of girls used the papers.

This independent advertising is one of the greatest competitors of offices, and next to this stands the practice of securing help through friends or acquaintances of either employer or employee. This last is a most satisfactory way and is universally preferred.

The chief supply of many offices is secured in three ways: Immigrants, importation of negroes from the South, and out-of-town girls who are attracted to the city on promises of work. Many employees are attracted by legitimate methods, but many others must be sought. "Domestic servants" are not included in the contract-labor clause of the immigration law, but that law does prohibit publishing or printing advertisements in any foreign country for the purpose of inducing aliens to come here upon promises of employment. To evade this, offices insert large and attractive advertisements in Swedish, Hungarian, Jewish, Finnish, and other American-published papers, and these are sent abroad in large quantities, and later the girls arrive with these clippings or with addresses found in this way.

Since the careful regulations at Ellis Island, many office runners are "spotted" and can no longer get the girls out at will, for now they must satisfactorily prove that they are relatives or the persons to whom the immigrant is consigned, and their answers to questions and statements must agree with those of the immigrant. Immigrants are not discharged to male relatives when married unless they are accompanied by their wives. To evade such regulations,

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the agents send emissaries abroad who get acquainted with girls and send them over with the name of the office, or some friend with whom the office works, who is to pose as a relative. Previously they send to this relative the name and description of the girl, so the two statements tally. Others have men who go back and forth on the ships, get acquainted with girls, and direct them to these offices. Cattle men on their return trips use their influence to direct both men and women to these offices and receive rewards. Steamship companies are their ablest allies. Though they maintain a careful supervision, one having rejected 1039 immigrants in nine months at the place of examination, they also have paid agents who drum up steerage passengers, and these agents include even school-teachers, postmasters, and priests. They reduce rates, and all of these things together help the office. At the request of offices these companies advance transportation, the former assuming the responsibility for its payment. Girls repay the office at a fair rate of profit when they secure positions. Although steamship companies are prohibited from encouraging immigration by any means other than ordinary commercial letters, circular advertisements, or oral representations giving the sailings, terms, and facilities, they extend offices many courtesies. Representing a well-known Swedish office, we requested a pass to Ellis Island, and it was readily granted and the card left blank so we could write in the name of any one we decided we wanted to see. Some companies furnish offices with lists of steerage passengers, so they know who, how many, and what nationality are coming



over. Then they try to find the people who know them or who intend to get them out and secure their promises to "bring them around for work." When this is not possible runners follow missionaries and others who take the girls to positions. In this way they get the address, visit them, and later the missionary finds her girls gone. The greatest care is used in admitting these missionaries to Ellis Island. The Austro-Hungarian Home, which was recently denied further admission, at the time of our investigation sent girls to an office which, on examination, we found was a saloon hotel for men. These offices aim to establish friendly relations with girls and in this way work them to get their friends to come over. In one case an immigrant paid an agent ten dollars to get a relative out of Ellis Island. She never saw the relative or heard from the agent. When she demanded the money he replied there was some trouble and he had spent it all. She also loaned this agent a phonograph, which he pawned. One Jewish girl was induced to come to this country by a *befriending* agency which told her she need not work, but could spend her time "picking up gold from the street." When rescued from being sent to a disorderly house she said she did not want a steady place, adding in a pathetic tone: "I am looking for gold, but I have found it not yet." She had exactly eight cents after paying a fee for the privilege of being sent to such a place! Another had no friends other than an office, to which she took her small savings to be sent to her family in Russia. Upon the best of authority it appears that in this and similar cases he never sent the money, trusting,

if the girl made inquiries, to the long delay in receiving an answer by mail, or to the excuse that the letters were lost. Friendly interest, except in finding employment, seems often to be a menace rather than a benefit, especially where offices are not inspected and deal with immigrants.

Perhaps the commonest plan is for a woman in this country, at the suggestion of the office, to write a relative or friend in Europe telling her of the opportunities and advantages for getting work. After considerable correspondence between these two, transportation is advanced, often by the office, and the girl comes to the country and is taken by this relative or friend and turned over to the office. Nobody has any responsibility after she gets a position, and this may be in cheap amusement places, in saloons, or in undesirable boarding-houses, depending entirely upon what the order is when the girl arrives.

These offices are undoubtedly very essential clearing houses for immigrant women who could not otherwise find work, and restriction of the immigration of women who are household employees would have a disastrous effect upon homes. But these offices will be serving a greater social and economic purpose if they are in the hands of responsible agents, and are compelled to send women to the thousands of honest homes which demand them.

A number of negro offices import girls from the South. They have white agents in the large Southern cities whose business it is to corral girls from the country districts, bring them into the cities, and ship them to Northern offices. When

the agent cannot get the transportation from the girl or her relatives, the offices furnish it, and the girl pays it back with considerable profit. One illustration will suffice: A negro girl was promised a position as nurse by an agent at Richmond, Virginia. She agreed to have \$12.75 for her fare deducted from her wages, and all her personal effects were subject to the order of the New York office. When she arrived she was told there were no vacancies for nurses, and she must do general housework. She refused and the office still held her trunk. When she complained it said she had worked it for a free passage North. The moral evils of such a system are shown in the following chapter.

The migration of girls from small towns and rural districts is not so haphazard as appears on first sight. Some offices have standing advertisements, which they run in the country newspapers, offering attractive work at good wages, but not necessarily appearing as offices. Girls come to the city in answer to these and are met at the stations and taken to these lodging-house offices. Others advertise in city papers and secure addresses, which they follow up by mail or in person. We were surprised at the number of answers to our advertisements from girls in small towns, who said they had never worked away from home and that we offered them a good opportunity to come to the city. Other offices send agents directly to out-lying small towns during dull seasons to work up a trade, while others use travelling men and canvassers to direct girls to their city office. Others locate near railways and their agents stand ready, not only to pounce on every

unprotected girl, but they make short runs out on the road in the hope of getting acquainted with girls before they reach their friends or any one who will send them to a safe place.

In a general way to sum up these offices, there are three classes. The first are the rarest and best. They seldom advertise or answer advertisements. Semi-annually they send circulars to old customers and desirable new ones. They ask for fees only when the engagement is made, never board or lodge, and are closed evenings. They do not favor employees waiting in the office, for they consider it demoralizing, and prefer to notify them by card or send the employer directly to them. They require references and know most of their patrons. Such an office is usually an old, well-established one, has few transients, fair equipment, some capital, and the annual income is from eight hundred dollars upward. These are usually fair in business dealings and are free from grave moral evils.

The second class is the most numerous. These board and lodge when convenient, use many of the methods outlined in this chapter, have waiting-rooms, and insist upon payment of fees at the time of application. As a rule they prefer references, but do not always insist, and know but little of where they send employees. They supply many of the small households. The general character of many of these could undoubtedly be raised, for they are susceptible to much improvement, and we believe that many use questionable methods, chiefly as the result of keen competition and absence of any kind of regulation or inspection.

The third class should, for the most part, "be wiped off the face of the earth," and they are far too numerous. Even the strictest inspection would not improve them, because most of the people who run them are incompetent or are thoroughly depraved and dishonest. These have little or no capital, equipment, or system, and are given over to the practices outlined in this and the following chapter. Such include many of the negro, immigrant, inferior American, and separate nationality offices previously described, and, we regret to say, some of the more fashionable ones are not exempt.

No city can congratulate itself that it is free from these conditions. Boston, by reason of its superior law and inspection, has fewer abuses, and these would be even less numerous if people who are defrauded would report their small losses. New York, because of the large number of its offices and immigrants, and Chicago and St. Louis, because of their location as labor centres, have unquestionably every phase of the conditions named. In Philadelphia this is especially true of the negro, of which there are a large number, and of many of the white offices. The only possible way by which patrons can be freed from these methods is to insist upon an adequate law based upon known facts, a *system* of impartial inspection—not a spasmodic makeshift, not an occasional raid—but systematic daily and weekly inspection by an administration that knows the specific evils and abuses for which it is to look. In addition every employer must feel it her duty to prosecute violations.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMMORALITY AND VICE

Sources of information : Visits to offices and agreements with proprietors ; interviews with waiting employers and employees ; stories of women who were traced or rescued ; records, and statements of officers in immigration homes and bureaus, prisons, reform societies, rescue homes, etc.

IN the preceding chapters intelligence offices have been considered as *bona-fide* places of business and have been studied from the business point of view. In them the housewife has recognized familiar scenes of office surroundings, experiences of many interviews, weary hours of search for girls, and despair or wrath at their incompetency or failure to arrive, lost fees, and petty pilfering. The employee has recalled the well-known pictures of the various places of waiting, of friendly gossip, or parting with her last dollar, and of initiation into the tricks of the trade.

But the surroundings, the business methods, and the frauds pale into insignificance beside the conscious, deliberate immorality of many offices and the traps which they set for their unwary and helpless victims. Of these the honest employer knows but little and the employee recalls many escapes. The bare fact is that while advertising honest work and while furnishing it to some, many also degrade,

debase, and ruin others, and later cast them out moral and physical wrecks. Not only are they robbed of their small savings, herded like animals, and subjected to many indignities by proprietors, but they must submit to association with and temptation by street-walkers and immoral men; not only must they lodge under conditions which rob them of their self-respect, but unsuspectingly they are sold into disreputable houses and held as prisoners. These facts and more can be proved, and still "the half will not be told."

Not all offices are engaged in this work, though with few exceptions they are careless in making inquiries where girls are sent. Figures can' only be approximate, but it is no exaggeration to say that in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago about seventy-five per cent. are not averse to sending women as *employees* to questionable places; and from forty to sixty per cent. send them as inmates, obtaining their consent when possible. The best offices are so ignorant of the extent of this practice that when called upon to co-operate in reform measures they refused to believe the charges until the contracts and affidavits were shown to them. Some offices, bearing every evidence of poverty, have insisted they would starve rather than furnish such houses, and have actually kicked out applicants for inmates for questionable houses, and such of course hesitated to believe our statements.

There is no question so pertinent among employers as "Why cannot we secure servants?" When offices receive from five dollars upward for girls furnished to disreputable houses because the demand

from these establishments is so great, and when our evidence shows that many thousands of women are annually sent to these houses, one answer to this question is given. Our investigation shows beyond a doubt that at least three cities—New York and Philadelphia with large numbers of immigrants, and Chicago with some immigrants and a large number of girls from surrounding country districts—contain many offices which supply these houses, and that no one pays much attention to what becomes of the employees sent to them. Boston is not to be included with the other three cities. We are prepared to say that girls are frequently furnished to disreputable houses with their own consent and as servants, but we found few open violations. Agents are exceedingly wary of strangers, and our facts are less certain, depending as they do upon observation and statements of employees rather than upon our affidavits. Employers must be known or come safely recommended before such a proposition will be entertained, and it is safe to say no stranger can secure girls openly as in other cities. Previous to the enforcement of the present law, which makes any other procedure unprofitable, an investigation revealed conditions similar to those which now prevail in other cities. But there is the same carelessness in placing girls, and so few inquiries are made that there is no reason to believe that a fairly presentable individual could not secure girls for such houses.

Our knowledge may be grouped under methods by which girls are obtained, influences of the offices while they wait for positions, conditions of placing,



and the effect upon the homes of employers. In a preceding chapter many of the methods of securing girls were described, but there are some which are peculiarly characteristic of offices which supply questionable houses. The assertion that the majority of women (who have not already gone astray) who enter disreputable houses by means of these offices take such places willingly is, we believe, untrue. The demand so far exceeds the supply that such offices find it necessary and profitable to maintain such expensive importation systems as have been described in the previous chapter, and many of the women thus obtained do not know their destination.

This is facilitated by the employment of "runners." A runner may be one of the proprietors or the husband of the woman who conducts the office, but he must be a suave, attractive young man who can win the confidence of the immigrant girls, and to do this he must know their language, customs, and foreign homes. His business is to bring them to the office, by any means and from any place, so he is found at landing places for immigrants, railway stations, boarding-houses where people out of work congregate, saloons, resorts, places of amusement, social gatherings, and even in tenements and homes, for he is always on the alert. We believe that no vestiges of slavery existing in the South are more absolute, more real, than that of the immigrant girl whose passage is prepaid by the office, or who comes from the country in answer to an advertisement and who is met by a runner—the essential factor in the system. One

case typifies thousands. A country girl arrives in a city like Chicago, or a woman who does not know one word of English lands in complex, bewildering New York straight from a peasant's home in Russia, Hungary, or Sweden. She comes consigned to friends or relatives whom the runner knows, and so he meets her with messages from them and wins her trust by his *helpfulness*. From that moment she is as helpless as though engulfed in a sea. Her baggage is sent to the office or to a boarding-house in collusion with it, and here it is held, upon one pretext or another, if the girl shows any disposition to leave. When girls have been rescued from these places, sometimes the only way to obtain their baggage has been through a show of force or by the payment of preposterous charges for board and storage. Day by day the girl is paraded before employers, and when she goes out it is under the strictest surveillance. After she is engaged and the fee is paid, the runner, still her faithful attendant, takes her to a new home. Not for one brief moment is she allowed to go to any place or to see any one without his approval. If she has fears she can tell no one, and too often she is sent to a place where all ears are deaf.

The character of some of these runners defies description. There seems to be no meanness to which they will not stoop. They rob girls of their small savings, they collect tribute when a girl has a position, and if it is in a disreputable house they become "cadets" and still levy a tax.

If a girl refuses to enter questionable places it is part of the work of the runner to ruin her and make

her more amenable to suggestions. The runner of a model agency recently established on the lower East Side in New York, as a result of this investigation, was recently set upon and severely beaten because of his connection with a decent agency. Two others were recently arrested while tearing the clothing off an immigrant girl over whom they were fighting, both claiming they had found her first and trying to pull her to their offices. Two others were quarrelling over a girl who did not wish to go to the office of either. One finally stole her pocketbook and ran to his office, and of course she had to follow him. It was returned only when she had promised to go to the address furnished. A runner who had left his position told us that it was impossible for any man to hold such a place and keep his self-respect, and that many of the things he was asked to do would not bear repetition, and yet he was a man of dull sensibilities.

Where runners are not employed the methods used by the proprietors are similar. In New York the immigrant home for Finnish girls is located less than two blocks from the Battery, where the immigrants land. When the missionaries from this home come over from Ellis Island, bringing the friendless girls committed to their charge, they sometimes need the protection of policemen. The streets are lined with men who accost the girls in their own language, grasp their baggage, and would literally tear them away if this protection were not given. Girls do not always know the character of the missionary, and are inclined to listen to the stories about her and the promises which their own coun-

trymen make. One of these missionaries succeeded in getting a girl for whom a woman proprietor had been watching for some time. She was so incensed that she followed them to the house, demanded the girl, and tried to remove her forcibly. When prevented she assaulted the missionary, blackening her eyes and otherwise disfiguring her. This is but one case showing the character, temper, and greed of some of the people who keep these offices, and the lengths to which they go to supply their trade, and the heads of immigrant homes say that such disturbances are not uncommon.

The methods used to secure girls for negro offices are equally shameful, and where they are sent North by white agents the same system of slavery exists as in the case of immigrants, for the girls are met at the stations and wharfs and kept at the offices until sold. They are often threatened until they accept positions in questionable places and are frequently sent out without knowing the character of their destination. These negro girls are utterly unfitted to meet the conditions of a great city, for they know no one but the employment agent, and as evidence of where some of them go the superintendent of the Bedford Reformatory says: "Almost without exception the negro girls at my institution have been brought North by some employment agency." Unlike the white offices, negro proprietors really believe they are bettering the condition of these girls by giving them city life and advantages and the opportunity to mingle with whites.

But the character of the runners is equalled by

the influences of the offices to which women are taken. Few who have read the previous descriptions or have visited these realize what effect such an environment has upon those who wait there daily. The crowded conditions, lack of supervision, indifference to the character of the people who mingle together, and lodging of men and women, as previously described, cannot but develop immorality. The proprietors argue that many immigrants come from conditions equally free, crowded, and dirty. But peasant homes, where the family and friends are acquainted and to a certain degree respect each other, exert an influence far different from that of a tenement office in a crowded metropolis, where the associates may be inebriate, diseased, or immoral or hardened criminals.

Certainly the moral influence of offices over, or connected with, saloons or gambling places cannot be good. In New York some are merely Raines Law hotels. One is a place where numbers of girls are entertained in the evening, entering the place through the side entrance. When we made our visit there was no sign of an office, but the wife of the proprietor, who was in the rear of the saloon, said it was one. She said she could furnish plenty of girls, as they came there to drink. Few girls were sent out for less than ten dollars, so the character of the place was evident. Not infrequently at night native dances and other entertainments at which liquor is brought in from these saloons are held in these home offices and lodging-places.

There are other objectionable surroundings the influences of which are not apparent at first sight.

We saw no connection with midwives and thought the frequency of such arrangements a coincidence; but inquiry revealed that they profited by the immorality of the girls, and furnished many a loophole for disreputable offices, when girls came back making accusations against proprietors of disreputable houses. Offices are friendly toward fortune-tellers and palmists, who ply a good trade with the idle, superstitious employees, whose desire for excitement leads them to sacrifice many a coin. Whether these establishments pay the office or are in collusion with it could not be learned. Few are so resourceful as the one which had a sign in one window, "Employment Agency," in another, "Facial Massage," and in the third, "Manicure." The proprietor advertised as a "Bureau of Social Requirements," and called it "The Innovation," which name seemed well applied. One Philadelphia office was run by an "artist photographer." This apparently was a blind, and obscene pictures were taken. When asked for his card he jeered and said: "I don't care about your trade; you must be new at the business."

Because of the character of many who frequent offices, one waiting-room and one lodging-house for both men and women are undesirable, and some such offices degenerate into mere hang-outs. Familiarities with and demoralization of women are more possible, and some offices do not allow men for this reason. Others have attendants to prevent loitering on the stairs. These conditions are most demoralizing in immigrant and negro offices, and in the latter we found employees in bed as late as ten

to twelve o'clock A.M., and men were waiting in these rooms or came in to ask them to take positions.

Enough has been said in the previous description of lodging-houses to show that crowded, dirty, and unsanitary, closely connected with furnished rooms for men, and often run by men, as they are, they furnish at least the opportunity for much immorality. In Chicago some of the so-called "working-girls' homes" are used and are a great boon to girls who cannot afford to live honestly elsewhere. But without hesitation we urge that all of them be carefully inspected, for many were found to be only disorderly houses which advertised in this way to attract girls. Some have such lax regulations that men and questionable women mingle indiscriminately with the girls; others require no references, and procuresses find it profitable to live there. One such place was open at all hours to men visitors, while another admitted that they lodged men occasionally. On another visit to such a "home" a dissipated, disreputable woman looked us over through a crack in the door and then contemptuously closed it in our faces. Not suspecting the character of the house, we had not "made up" as working girls. In many little protection is afforded by house rules, and one or two undesirable girls can have a great influence. In order to secure addresses, we advertised for such homes and received over thirty-five replies in answer to one such advertisement—all offering rooms and various attractions for working girls. In Philadelphia girls are more frequently sent to "furnished rooms," the character of which offices do not know, or to which they are indifferent. One office-keeper

says, "They are all right," and sends girls to them; while another says "They are all wrong," and "I would not send a girl there for love or money."

We found some offices advertised by prominent and alluring signs which were disorderly houses, and the signs were used as a blind or ruse to attract girls, and these were not infrequently in tenements. They are run chiefly in the daytime, lest at night they create suspicion. In some the girls are simply inmates under a proprietor who is in reality the madame; in others rooms are rented to the girls, who pay a good price, and they can receive any one they wish or whom the madame sends. Girls out of work are induced to accept lodging in these by promises of employment. Sometimes offices are not disreputable houses, but permit street-walkers to lodge there and influence other lodgers. Other offices run their own mountain, seashore, and suburban disorderly houses and actually imprison girls who are unwilling to stay. One office sent three girls up to its own mountain house, assuring them they were going to take positions in a summer hotel. When they arrived they found themselves not only in a disreputable house, but prisoners. One of the girls made so much disturbance by crying and attempting to escape that the keeper beat her and threw her out. When the case came to our notice she was in the hospital, insane from treatment and fright. She died there, and a few days later another of the three escaped and was also insane. The relatives, ignorant and poor, were powerless. They complained to the office-keeper, who insulted them and said: "The girls ask to be sent there and then



make trouble." Their defence is always that "the girl went willingly." Offices which own disorderly houses are not so common as those which send girls into other established houses, but we are convinced that a constant surveillance would reveal many other irregularities, if not open houses, for report after report of the male investigators, which we were unable to follow up, recommended "night visits."

The greatest evil is placing girls in disreputable houses. They may be sent as employees with or without their consent; or as inmates, by their own request, with consent secured through misrepresentation or fraud, or without their knowledge. The first is the most difficult to remedy, for it furnishes the office with the best defence. Women, not all of them immoral, ask for such work, because the duties are light and the pay better than in private houses, and they are sent willingly, the object often being through this gradual means to induce them to become inmates. One girl, whose case is typical, took a position as an employee in such a house. For a few days she was permitted to do her housework unmolested. She noticed that there were other girls in the house and many men, but was not suspicious. On the third day the mistress asked her to wear clothing more suitable to the house, saying: "You have worked long enough in street clothes, and there are many men callers whom you must help entertain." No attempt was made to keep her when she declared that she would leave. Many, even the best, fill applications from these houses and allege that women sent as employees are in no danger. But the life in such a house must

either repel or tempt them to earn money more quickly and by less honest means than housework. The constant hammering upon the sensibilities by the things with which they come into contact must harden them, and they are continually exposed to persuasion. Some offices have said with evident pride that they had the custom of the best sporting houses in the city. Upon good authority it was learned that in Philadelphia some which supply colored girls are actually backed financially by such houses, and they offered to put us in touch with "backers," who would enable us to "form connections in New York." Even free public offices do not always regard this as a serious evil, and in Chicago, when the Woman's Protective Association investigated, they found that they were not only extremely careless in placing girls, but that they sent them as employees to hotels and houses they knew to be disreputable, and so informed the employees. Since the agitation by this association, they keep a "black list" to which help is refused.

Undoubtedly there are some who ask to be sent as inmates, and offices simply make it easy for them to change from house to house. In such cases the fees are high, and the contract usually contains a guarantee by the office that they will remain thirty days. Office-keepers consider it a defence to say: "Well, what can we do? they ask us." Some asserted that they were accosted on the street and asked to direct girls to these places. It is a trifle odd that girls, in this haphazard way, so unerringly pick out such good sources of information. The "old timer" who requests such a place is usually no

loss to the ranks of household workers, for love of ease, aversion to work, desire for finery, false pride, and vicious habits maké her undesirable, but she is a source of much danger when permitted to frequent offices purporting to furnish honest and well-meaning workers. Any one who goes as an employee into the waiting-rooms and notes the familiarity and the ease with which girls make each other's acquaintance, and how readily they rely upon each other, will see at once how wide the influence of such women is. Many girls ask to go into such houses, not knowing anything of the conditions except that they will have easy work and much money—girls who might never find this path to ruin if the office did not direct them.

These offices have so many girls for such places—voluntary, or obtained by coercion—that they take contracts to furnish a certain number of girls weekly or effect exchanges when for any reason the house wishes to dispose of former girls. So close is this bond, that in some instances where prosecutions of offices have been made, the house has paid all the fines and fees for legal service.

Many girls are sent out with their consent secured by means of persuasion or force. In the first offices dwell upon the luxury, advantages, and pay, until girls are bewildered and see only the side which is picturesque and exciting. In the other they take advantage of the despair and poverty of girls by holding back honest places and telling them there is nothing else for them to do. When their money is gone and the office demands pay for lodging and constantly nags them to take such places, it can

scarcely be said that they go of their own accord. One girl held out for a week after her money was gone, and then said, in answer to such a proposal: "You have told me for a week there is nothing else, but I have seen others go out to honest work. I'll take it, but I've been sent out before and I know it's a choice between hell and starvation." That is exactly the situation, though the office tries to picture it as heaven.

Once in a house of this character, a girl is not always permitted to leave. The reader will recall the case of the girls who escaped from the country house and were taken to the hospital. One office in Chicago supplies such a house in Wisconsin, and it is only one among many. Girls are sent up there with the understanding that they are going to a hotel. The buildings are surrounded by a high stockade, and once inside it is impossible, except through some lucky chance, to escape. They are kept prisoners until they are no longer wanted and then are set adrift, penniless, ragged, and broken in spirit. In Philadelphia two girls sent to such a den were held prisoners in the very heart of the city, and only managed to escape by attracting the attention of some passers-by. Another girl traced from an office to such a house was found locked in a closet.

It seems impossible to believe that women—wives and mothers—are not only cognizant of this work, but do the actual placing, and they, more than the men, send girls out without informing them of the character of the places. It was a woman who shrugged her shoulders and said, when asked for a girl for such a place: "I don't care for what

purpose you want her. I give you a girl for a waitress—you do as you please when you get her there.” It was also a woman who said: “It’s best to send green girls to bad places. I was in trouble some time ago, for the brothers of a girl threatened me with arrest and it cost considerable money to hush it up, so now I use green girls.” Verily experience is a great teacher! Only too often did we find old gray-haired women, and young wives and mothers, sending into such places, without hesitation, their own country-women who, but for them were friendless in a new country; and when they knew that they could come back but physical and moral wrecks and utterly unfit for any honest work. A woman sent to us as a chambermaid said she wished to go home at night because she had been sent to such bad places that she was afraid to stay nights. She gave us some of the addresses of these places, and when looked up they proved to be notoriously tough places.

One Jewish girl, sixteen years old, whom we rescued, gave a simple story. She had worked with her brother at tie-making, but had grown restless and gone to an office for work. An assistant found her there just going out to a disreputable house and paid ten dollars for the privilege of saving her. The agent represented to her that she was going to a restaurant to work for two dollars a week and tips, and she had no suspicion of double dealing. When told where they were sending her, she became thoroughly frightened and hysterical and cried bitterly for two hours. She had no money and had been in the office all day without food. For a time

she refused food because she had no money, though she finally offered us her small bundle of clothing. She was sent to a Jewish home for training, but seemed averse to steady work because the office had told her she need not work hard and money came easily. Such pernicious teaching does untold harm in encouraging immorality and shiftlessness, and especially if it comes from an immigrant's own countryman.

Open and defiant as much of the work is, precautions are taken in the more fashionable offices, such as the French and American. One important feature of this is the exchange system. Bright, capable girls who might make trouble, but who are too attractive to turn away, are sent out upon the order of *friendly* offices in other cities. How devilish is the scheme which strands a girl in a distant city, and what are her possible chances against such a *fine system*? Two, rescued in Philadelphia, after being prisoners for a month, had been taken there from a New York agency. Another agent offered to send some girls to Florida, telling them that a smart girl who could hold her tongue could make lots of money, and that he sent them there in good numbers. A French girl was sent from New York to a dive in Philadelphia and, managing to escape, was cared for by Catholic sisters and sent back to France. There is evidence to show that Chicago and St. Louis exchange, though the St. Louis end of the thread was not traced. To defraud a woman of her earnings, to keep her waiting for weeks for a position, and to house her in wretched quarters, require a heart and conscience of adamant, but to send a

girl penniless and friendless to such places in a strange city does not seem a possibility, much less the common occurrence that it proves to be. Such traffic is much increased during periods of national importance. For the World's Fair and St. Louis Exposition, offices were opened in the large cities and many women sent out only to find themselves in disreputable houses or resorts. Others imported them from Europe. For the St. Louis Exposition, girls were lured to America by advertisements in various European, especially German, papers, offering positions at good wages at light housework. In one instance, ten girls were thus attracted and met at the station by the advertiser. Two of them, who, according to her ideas, failed to meet the advertisement's requirements for youth and beauty, were refused employment, and appealed to a policeman, who directed them to the woman's address where the eight girls had gone. Proposals were made to the girls upon their arrival that they engage in improper pursuits.

Not all offices which do shady work are so bold. Many will not sell a girl outright, but encourage and allow street-walkers and solicitors to frequent their offices, receiving from them gifts and large fees. They mingle with the girls, invite them out to lunch, make them presents, and induce them to accompany them to their homes. We have seen these painted, powdered, silk-gowned, jewelry-bedecked women mingling with the bareheaded, booted peasants, and have seen them go out for walks in the parks and finally disappear with the girl and her little bundle. Still others refuse to

send girls, but will refer employers to other offices which cater to this trade, thus assisting such work if not actually engaging in it.

Such traffic is evidently conducted more or less openly, since the investigators were strangers, and yet had no difficulty in securing the facts. Some little precaution is exercised. For instance, some offices will not send to a house that has not police protection; others keep young, inexperienced clerks and then plead ignorance, an excuse which is frequently accepted by relatives in case of trouble, especially if the clerk is afterwards discharged.

Even where they do not actually and consciously sell girls, negligence and carelessness make it easy to get them. With a little deception or reticence on the part of the employer, girls can be secured from almost any private agency which operates for profit only, and can be taken away as soon as the fee is paid. In some of the best ones, unknown men can secure employees for out-of-town places without any questions. There is not only carelessness but indifference, for when places are reported as bad no attention is paid, and so another girl is sent, the office saying: "If she don't like it, she can leave; if she stays, well, that 's her business."

There is one further evil which lies somewhat within the control of the office—sending girls into private homes where the conditions are notoriously bad. They repeatedly return and report that they cannot stay because of the conditions or persistent attentions of male members of the family. When an office receives half a dozen reports of such a home from different girls, whom it has known as



honest and reliable, what does it do? Not refuse to send a girl—but some one else who will “meet the requirements.” A well-dressed woman came into a prominent Chicago office and said, in our hearing: “Have you the girl you promised?” “Yes.” “You are sure you understand—his wife is dead, and he wants a girl who can play the piano and is entertaining—and”—with a depreciating gesture—“you know the rest.” A young, fresh, good-looking girl was sent out with her. Offices continually send young girls to homes where they know there are unscrupulous husbands and sons and say: “If they don’t stay, that’s another fee; if they do, that’s not our look-out.” Conditions in a private family are not so well known as is the character of a disreputable house, but a conscientious agent can do much toward saving innocent girls from both.

Certainly for some of the inmates of workhouses, reformatories, and other institutions, some offices are responsible, and many have learned their first steps in immorality, theft, and inebriety in them, or in positions in which they were carelessly placed. The daughter of honest, well-to-do parents in a small town drifted into one of these offices upon losing her position in the city, and they sent her to a wealthy, unscrupulous, dissipated old man, as a “sort of assistant,” and she was kept a prisoner for a while and later thrown out with a few hundred dollars. She was then sent into another house, where the two sons forced their attentions upon her, and here she learned to drink and smoke. These steps led her to the workhouse, where she died, her life

being just five years long in the city. Another girl was sent to a questionable house, and upon her threat to leave and expose the place it was made to appear by a cunning device that she had stolen, and she was sent to prison on this charge.

Negro offices are so hopelessly immoral that some city authorities think it is useless to disturb them and argue that they do not affect the whites. As a matter of fact they do, for some of their best patrons are whites, and they have many white girls. One white girl in Philadelphia was taken to an office by the colored cook in the house where she was holding her first position. They told her that the only position open was in a sporting house, where she need do nothing but have a good time and make money. Upon refusal, she was told she could go there and see how the white ladies fared, and if she did not change her mind it would not hurt her, and she could then go to another office and get a slave's job. They said they were "only sorry for poor white girls and tried to put them in the way of a good time." The negroes are not only more indifferent about the kind of place, but say frankly that they prefer to send girls to sporting houses. Even the most conscientious do not consider it wrong to send a girl into these places as an employee, although they acknowledge she may become both immoral and intemperate. Offices reflect the current thought among many city negroes that immorality between negroes and whites is a mark of distinction and is to be encouraged. So long as this is true, something more than legislation and inspection is required.

When asked to compare the dangers of intelligence offices with those of advertising, girls have favored the latter. Some newspapers exercise a careful supervision over advertisements, and girls testify that most of the offers found in these are *bona fide*. In these some of our advertisements were refused as suspicious, though we had not made an extreme effort to have them appear so. Unfortunately, the papers having the greatest amount of advertising as a rule use the least care, and advertisements are answered by invitations to lunch, requests for appointments, etc., and many of those requesting help are from doubtful employment offices and questionable houses. The private post-offices which newspapers run make it possible for these places to mislead girls, with little hope of the advertisers ever being traced. In such papers, it is always a risk to answer or make a request for a housekeeper, and ladies advertising that they wish to place their girls during their absence from the city are the especial prey of such sharks. Household workers' advertisements are less dangerous than are those for office positions. An assistant answered thirty of the latter in a prominent New York paper, and twenty were not only doubtful but open proposals.

There is another point from which the work of these offices must be considered: the effect upon the employer and her home. Can employers afford to accept household workers who come from such dirty, disease-laden, vermin-infested, and immoral places as many of these offices and lodging-houses are? Can they afford to accept women who associate with street-walkers and spend part of their time

in disreputable houses? Do they want women just out of workhouses, or hospitals; or who are physical and moral lepers, ready to contaminate all with whom they come into contact, and who are doing housework temporarily? Some offices even assist unmarried couples to get places together in quiet, out-of-the-way houses, assuring the employer that they are man and wife and thoroughly respectable. For this falsehood they receive an additional fee. The employer may get her employee from a good office, but she can never be sure that she has not been the rounds. Some girls would scorn an immigrant office, but it must be remembered that the fashionable offices supply the fashionable disreputable house, and the deterioration may be slower but is equally sure. Certainly the grade of women in household work can never be markedly raised so long as workers are recruited from such sources. That these women take housework only when nothing else offers is further shown by the fact that eighty per cent. of the inmates of the workhouse on Blackwell's Island claim this, saying: "Oh, we do this when we are up against everything else."

Where there are children and young men in the family, the question is even graver, for many impressions from both the character and the habits of employees are gathered. The requirements which mothers have made in our hearing for nurse girls seem to us little less than insane. We have seen them taken from negro and white offices when they were less fit companions for a child, from both hygienic and moral standpoints, than some of the

inmates of workhouses. The only requirement was of wages. Some mothers' knowledge of the probable influence of the nurse upon the child appears to be bounded only by economic laws.

When these investigations were made, New York and Pennsylvania had no adequate law for the prosecution of such offices, and no one had made it his only business to prosecute under the new Illinois law. No redress for sending a girl into a disreputable house without her knowledge, unless she is a minor and is "abducted"! Even with this protection we found many girls between fourteen and eighteen offered for such houses, and offices have regular contracts to furnish girls of this age. What redress has a girl who wishes to prosecute them under these defective laws? How can she possibly prove that they knew the kind of place, or even that they sent her there, for they avoid giving receipts for fees, or send a runner with her so she has not even a copy of the address. Or, again, the offices remove and cannot be traced, and her story is not believed. Handicapped as the girl is by language, ignorance, poverty, and lack of influential friends, the office knows it is reasonably safe in its nefarious work. When a girl has relatives, who are disposed to "make trouble," they are bought off. The depths of iniquity to which these offices sink is further seen by the fact that negro and immigrant white, and the lowest of American, offices will, for an extra consideration or a large fee, agree to take back a girl and send her to the country or to a hospital, if necessary, charging a new fee and furnishing other girls upon the same agreement.

A more fundamental reason why offices escape prosecution is: that once in such houses, girls lose their self-respect, and form habits and associates which are stronger than steel bands in chaining them to the office, and their only resource is to return there for further aid. The vain, misguided, and headstrong fall into these office snares quite as readily as the ignorant, and no one frequenting them can feel sure of the kind of place to which she is sent. For many shattered lives and much wretchedness, we have only a few personal stories, gathered in the course of a brief investigation. But the victims of the *negligence* of the best offices and the *iniquity* of the worst offices are found all over the city, in the hospitals, almshouses, workhouses, and jails, in saloons, on the streets, and acting as second-rate help in families, and they can be found simply for the trouble of looking. One office-keeper says that she knows personally several girls in New York hospitals, thus led astray, and all have been in the city less than a year.

The connection between offices and disreputable houses will exist so long as the demand of these houses exceeds the supply and offices furnish convenient supply stations, and so long as the laws are inadequate and the policy is the "let-alone" one, for the chief aim of most cities is to collect the license fee. Too much reliance has been placed upon the free public agency to correct evils, and experience has shown that it is a failure for this purpose. Even a slight enforcement of law improves conditions. Whenever an arrest is made or an office has trouble, the others say for awhile, "We

must be careful"; "We are watched"; and, "Our patrons must wait." If the "trouble" lasted, many patrons would always wait. To make clean offices, foreign countries must co-operate and know more of the places where their emigrants are going; cities and towns must watch to see who comes for them and where they go in the city, and public opinion and patron must insist upon clean work from every public office. The employee must be given at least protection in looking for honest employment, and it must be assumed that she seeks this. Those who prefer a disreputable house do not need an office, protected by a license from the city, to help them. While such patrons are willing to pay from \$5 to \$50 for girls, unfair pressure will always be brought to bear upon waiting employees. Certainly they have a right to demand that when they pay a fee it shall not be for the privilege of association with street-walkers, and for submission to unfair and dishonest proposals.

This chapter is in no sense of the word intended as a contribution to the question of methods of dealing with the social evil, whether it shall be regulated, exterminated, licensed, tolerated, or if it is necessary or otherwise. Its sole purpose is to show one source of supply—places where unwilling recruits are secured, and to insist that the methods are unfair and that some offices are sailing under false colors. Even granting that neither regulation nor segregation will affect the demand, one thing is certain: increase the risk, and the majority of such offices will retrench their work or go out of business, for they will do nothing that will not pay—

and honest, ignorant, and helpless girls will be much better protected; for disorderly houses cannot so readily reach women who are penniless, friendless, and discouraged—a time when such proposals are most favorably received.



## CHAPTER V

### THE OTHER SIDE—OFFICE HARDSHIPS

Sources of information: Incidents in offices and talks with proprietors.

PROBABLY no difference of opinion exists as to the function of the employment office which purports to furnish "servants," but it is equally probable that no two persons agree upon just what such an office should be like; what its methods should be and what its relation to the public is.

Probably nine tenths of the public who patronize them regard them as a "solution of the servant problem," and only the old, experienced, and honest agents know enough not to advertise them as such,—attractive and lucrative as the method is. Here the probabilities end and facts must be faced. No one regards a bank as a solution of a financial crisis; no one looks at a store as a remedy for inequality in supply and demand; and no one thinks of a commercial enterprise, conforming to the laws of trade, as a philanthropy or an object upon which to heap abuse. It is a serious question if the public, both employers and employees, are not to some degree responsible for the conditions described, and if they do not demand too much of them. These offices are just as much a medium of exchange as a

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bank or store, but the public instead regards them as factories where household workers may be manufactured, and its demands are correspondingly unreasonable. Now an intermediary—a medium of exchange—can never be a solution of any problem whose roots go deep down into social and economic life, and any office which so advertises does not understand its mission. But such an office can start or co-operate in other movements.

The function of an agency is to register the wants of each applicant, to use every honest means to bring employers and employees together, and to adopt reasonable precautions for both. But it cannot make employers more reasonable or increase the competency or the number of employees, and it has no facilities for making them more honest or temperate—at least, it cannot do this unless it becomes an educational centre, exerting a wide influence upon both employers and employees. The preceding chapters have shown many methods from which they can refrain, but *creating* numerous, competent, and faithful employees, and fair and just employers, is a different matter.

The people who are in charge of many of the intelligence offices are not of the standard to make them educational centres, and this is partly the fault of applicants. The treatment of employment agents by many employers is often such that men and women of refinement, culture, and education cannot retain such positions without much humiliation and loss of self-respect. The treatment accorded clerks in stores is far more civil. Of course, there are many gracious employers, who make the life of the

agent a delight, but every office has its full share of the others. At the risk of too much detail the following occurrences are given, illustrating the attitude of many employers. These occurred in the best offices, and the employers represent the best social grades.

The attitudes of two employers of the same social status may be utterly different. To two ladies waiting in an office were brought two colored men. While talking with them the men sat down. The manager of the office said in an undertone, not intended for the employers, "When you are talking with a lady about a place, always stand." One employer thanked the agent afterwards, but the other actually flounced out of the room, saying, "You are a dictator, not an office-keeper." With but this one experience she tried to hurt the reputation of the office by saying it catered only to the wealthy.

Any other business can adopt any system which seems best, but not the intelligence office. For instance, one has been severely criticised for influencing wages, because it states in its advertisements the wages offered. But individual employers who advertise independently state wages as an attraction, and with these the office must compete. In a model office, recently started, both employer and employee must register separately before they can be introduced to each other. To save time, only girls who come somewhere near the requirements are introduced. Employers have indignantly left the office because they could not go into the employees' room and in the presence of some fifty girls question all of them. What pandemonium, if fifty em-

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ployers were in there at once! Employers sometimes refuse to wait in attractive waiting-rooms, or use private interview rooms, because they want to be in the main room and hear all that is said. The introduction of any innovation, even when it is for the employers' benefit, meets with more criticism than commendation.

Charges of favoritism are frequent. No doubt less reputable offices are guilty, but many of the accusations are undeserved. In one office there were two well-dressed ladies. One had waited an hour, the other had just come in. To the latter was brought a young Danish girl, who spoke almost no English. Through an interpreter she was engaged. She was rather attractive, and when the first lady heard she was taken she gave one enraged scream and rushed to the door. Every one came in to see what was the trouble. She was intercepted downstairs by the manager, and said she never saw such awful partiality. The facts of the case were: The employer who engaged the girl had a Danish cook who could understand her, while the first one had no other servant and could not have said one word to her; the girl refused to go anywhere if she had to do the laundry work, and the first employer would have no one who would not do it; the girl would not go where there were children, and the first employer had two—three impossible points of adjustment, which the manager knew.

In another instance a man came in, and said he had registered three weeks ago and both his neighbors had secured employees, and he would expose the office as a fraud. Investigation showed that he

had seven children, and wanted one employee for general housework for \$3.50 per week. The manager, with a policeman and a club, could not have sent girls there, when they know how much they are in demand.

Another office, at our suggestion, fitted up a clean, comfortable, wholesome waiting-room for employees, separating the men and the women. One employer refused to patronize it because she said it was "trying to put ladies and servants on an equality by giving them such waiting-rooms." The same employer, however, wanted a servant who was "neat, clean, temperate, and moral." Another objected to the courteous treatment shown employees, and said, "Treat them like cattle—that 's my kind of an office."

One of the great difficulties is to maintain uniform fees, for both employers and employees offer additional fees for favors. We have heard employers offer from two to ten dollars for especially desirable girls, and employees smaller sums for positions in well-known households. Wealthy and aristocratic families are especially desirable, and offices can always command a good fee or a gift for these. Many offices would never demand these bribes were they not flaunted before them.

In addition to the unfair attitude of employers the office has many other grievances. This is due both to thoughtlessness and dishonesty. The telephone, while often a great convenience, is also such a nuisance that some have discarded it. An employer will call up half a dozen offices and ask each one to send up several girls. This brings a good

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number to choose from, but it costs every girl a fee and carfare, whether she gets the position or not. Since only one or two are wanted, the others must be turned away. We wanted some "pointers" on what good employers did when engaging employees. Selecting one, we followed her to several offices. In each, she ordered two girls sent up, and always ended in a most appealing tone, "I have been sent here by a friend, and I do hope I can rely on you. I will make it all right, if you will do the best you can, and *do* send me some one." If the offices responded to these pleas, several girls were disappointed that day.

Employers ask to have girls kept for them, and then engage others and do not notify the office. Employers feel little responsibility for such an order or a contract, but seem rather to congratulate themselves on the trouble they make. A few offices discriminate against girls who break engagements, but they do not apply this to employers. Sometimes out-of-town employers pay a fee and order girls. Then they telegraph that they do not want them, and demand the fee, but not until they think the girls have had time to leave the city. They take them when they arrive, but represent to the office that the girls never came. The office is thus "done" out of the fee, if it refunds it, and the transportation, which it often advances. A lady in New York ordered two maids. They were sent up, and later she telephoned, asking to have her fee refunded, saying they did not suit. The clerk went up to see if others could not be sent, and one of the maids opened the door for her!

Employers secure help under false pretences, by misrepresenting the work and conditions in their homes. They ask for a "thoroughly respectable" or "nice girl" assuring her of a "good home," and then the only sleeping quarters provided are such as an ironing-board placed over the bath-tub; a bed made up for two on the dining-room table; a closet between two sleeping-rooms, without ventilation of any kind unless the doors into these rooms are left open; a mattress on wash-tubs in the basement; rooms heated only from the hall, or so crowded that a girl has no privacy, and cannot control her few small belongings. One woman planned her new three-story house with the attic windows so high no one could see out of them. When the architect remonstrated, she said, "Oh, those are for the maids; I don't expect them to spend their time looking out." These conditions are not in tenements or "cheap flats," but in fashionable boarding-houses, apartments, and residences.

Hours, number in the family, conditions, privileges, and number of children are most often misrepresented, for the plan seems to be to resort to any means to get an employee and trust to other devices to keep her. One girl was engaged as a general houseworker for a family of ten and reported two or three days later that there were fourteen. Although they had misrepresented, this family held the office responsible for the girl's departure. This is really so serious an abuse that one or two offices insist upon a signed contract, so that neither party can say she said or meant something else. When a wage rate is agreed upon, the employer sometimes

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tries to keep the girl for less. Others hire girls, keep them as long as possible, and then refuse to pay them, going to another office for new girls. The complaints are so common about treatment and conditions in some employers' homes that some offices keep a list, and simply say that they have no girls, for they know the girls will not stay, and then the employer will say the "office is no good." In one such a case a green girl came back to the office, saying her mistress had struck her and she had had nothing to eat. Another girl sent to the same place had the door slammed in her face, and when she asked for her carfare, was told "The best girl is n't worth more than \$14." When no girl will stay with her, this employer comes down to the office, shouts at the top of her voice, calls the agents criminals, and abuses every one within sight. Some represent that there are no children, and keep them out of sight until the girl is fairly settled. Unreasonable requirements are often not exposed until later. One employer refused to keep a cook because she did not smoke cigarettes, and she had to have some one to "lay the smoke to." Nothing had been said about this requirement at the office, but the agent was blamed. When employers so deceive the office, a very high showing of morality cannot be expected of employees or agents, though employers are often accustomed to demand higher standards than those to which they aspire.

It is necessary that agents should know something of the places to which they send girls. But whenever an agent asks an unknown employer any questions, he runs the risk of losing her patronage, for



many consider them, no matter how delicately asked, as an affront to their dignity, and refuse to accept explanations.

The unfair attitude of many employers toward each other works much hardship to the office. The agent satisfactorily places a girl, another employer discovers her through one of her own employees and gets her away, and the agent must furnish another girl free. In the business world it would be considered dishonorable and unprofessional, but in the search for household workers any methods seem honest.

In one, a girl had been engaged at \$4 per week. An employer sitting near heard the terms, and when the first employer went to pay her fee, she offered the girl a dollar per week more. The girl said she would take it, but the employment agent objected. The girl said, "Don't you want a poor girl to earn her living?" "Yes," was the reply, "but a dollar a week extra is not worth breaking your word for." The girl went with her first employer and is now receiving \$7.

The inequality of wages makes it difficult for agents to place girls in many families. Recently a man in much need of a general worker offered \$10 per week. The agent replied, "You will pay her \$10 per week for the summer, then she will refuse to work for a lower figure, and will say she got it at this office, and we will be floated with high-priced employees, and held responsible for wages." This agent ran the risk of being called "an interferer," but the man was a reasonable one in this instance. But if the offer had been made directly to the em-

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ployee, what would she have thought of this interference?

There are many ways in which employers are dishonest. The most common way is to refuse to pay fees. Some employers go into offices, stay a short time, and engage a girl, and both tell the office they "are not suited," and so save a fee. Others never go into an office, but stand out in the hall, and intercept girls who are coming in or going away. A common practice among the "respectable middle class" when engaging immigrant girls is to arrange with the office-keeper as to the amount of wages which shall be paid. Then they take the girl and have the house cleaned, floors scrubbed, blankets washed, all the rough work of which they can think, done, and pay \$5 or \$6, instead of the \$12 that they promised to give, and discharge the girl, getting a new one when the work has again accumulated.

The petty jealousies which exist among employers, the false references they give, their neglect to answer reference-blanks, thereby keeping employees and other employers waiting for days, are all serious problems, which have been discussed, and which prevent an agent's doing honest and effective work, even when he is so disposed.

There is one serious grievance which is common to both employers and employees. A woman's privilege of changing her mind makes no end of trouble. Girls who the office thinks safely placed come back in a day or two with no other excuse than this. Offices spend half a day getting girls there to keep an appointment, then no employer appears, and when car- and telephone-fares are paid to learn

the reason it is found that she has changed her mind. Some employers go to employment agencies as they go shopping,—not in need of a girl but to see if there is any one there better than they have, or for the excitement of “something to do,” and they order girls as they do goods, on approval, but with no idea of keeping them.

But this is not all. The employment agent has the employees to deal with. They misrepresent their characters and capacities; they secure addresses from the office, and answer them without its approval; they visit places, return, and say they are filled or “are undesirable,” when they have taken the position or recommended it to a friend. They not only leave places for trivial reasons, but accept them when they do not expect to stay. One negro, a very good worker, was seeing the world in this way. She became acquainted with car porters, and “worked” them for transportation, staying in various homes while she saw the city. She had thus visited twenty-five cities in three years, and of course the offices did not know her scheme. Employees’ demands are frequently so unreasonable that offices cannot get them positions. One girl engaged for the summer and then found the family were going to the seashore instead of the mountains. She objected, and when the employer remarked sarcastically, “I will ask my wife and we may change,” she was delighted and said she would wait until the next day if he would let her know at once. Offices are powerless to change these unreasonable demands. When they make suggestions or hint at impossibilities, the girls think they are interfering with their

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rights. An agent may raise the wage rate, but when he attempts to lower it, the girl flounces out into some other office.

The office cannot go back of the employer's reference, and if it is not answered by the employer the girl must be sent without a reference or turned away. Sometimes an employer will insist upon taking a girl without a reference, but if she is not satisfactory the office is blamed. It is a difficult thing for an agent to know what to do when a girl is reported dishonest. It is a serious thing to refuse her a place, and it is equally serious to get her one if she is really dishonest. One office had furnished a household with employees, ten in number. The employer returned from abroad and, in the course of unpacking, a valuable lace flounce was lost. Every maid was discharged, no references given, and the office forbidden to place them. Two of these girls went astray, and afterwards the flounce was found in an empty box in the basement, among the folds of paper, where it had been overlooked. This is only one of many such problems which come before the agent. Out of spite, employers refuse references and give bad characters, and out of spite girls make it impossible for reputable employers to get girls. One girl, discharged because of her familiarity with the coachman, sat in a well-known office and told such falsehoods about a reputable and desirable place that fourteen cooks refused to go. Finally the cause was discovered, and the employee was ordered out, never to return. The fifteenth accepted the position offered.

The office has a constant struggle with incom-

petents. The intemperate and untrustworthy come to it, not to secure positions, but to use it as a hang-out or meeting-place. They induce waiting employees to go to other offices. There are petty jealousies among employees, and unless they are given many privileges about an office they keep other girls away or tell falsehoods about it. New offices have to contend with many who come only out of curiosity to see "what it 's like."

In all lines of business there is unfair competition, and the intelligence office does not escape it. Offices send their agents in disguise into offices to get away the girls who may be waiting there. We know instances of where offices have actually engaged disreputable and undesirable girls to go to other offices and take positions from them. Then the girl would do something to get dismissed and would give the office the reputation of handling undesirable employees, or she would tell untrue stories. Assaults by runners on each other are common in their struggle for patronage.

In the course of many investigations we have found no other extensive business where the demands of patrons are so unreasonable, the attitude of both employers and employees so discourteous, everybody so ready to charge bad faith and fraud, and the appreciation of services so meagre. This is, of course, partly due to the people who own the offices, but any one will have a pioneer task in changing these conditions, which depend so much upon the attitude of patrons. It is inevitable, however, and the first steps must come through the recognition that the agency is a medium of exchange, not a

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“servant” factory, with unlimited means for increasing the supply, which depends, as we have shown, upon immigration, which is an international problem; upon conditions of work, which vary in every home in the country; upon economic conditions, which are rooted in the competition of other kinds of work; upon social laws, which are fundamental and broad enough to include all organized social life in America. Any one of these problems will swamp any intelligence office which attempts to deal with it. Every office should be held strictly accountable for the best economic and moral methods, and should not violate one of the principles of a good business institution without answering to the law and to the home; but employers and employees must realize that the problem of the household worker begins back with the first “master and servant.” The office has a great function as an exchange, but it does not deserve to be hampered by criticisms because it cannot “solve the servant problem.” Only the employer and employee can do that, and the agency does its best work as a disinterested agent and as an educational centre for both.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICE AND HOUSEHOLD WORK

Sources of information : Talks with girls waiting for positions and answers by them to questions on blanks ; talks with, and answers to, questions on blanks, and letters from 350 employers ; literature wherever it relates to offices.

AT first a study of employment agencies did not seem to involve the great problem called "domestic service." But only a little way in the investigation it became apparent that it was really a household problem, from one point of view, for fully three fifths of them are run chiefly to supply households. There are three ways in which household workers are secured : with or without references from offices ; by advertising ; or from friends of the employer or employee. Certainly the first is the only one which is always available and upon which the public feels it has a direct claim.

The scope of this chapter will not permit a broad discussion of household labor, for that has been done elsewhere by far abler writers, and there are comprehensive plans for further study. But there is such a close relation between homes and offices, that such facts as have been found in the study of offices are presented in the hope of throwing additional light upon the subject of household work.

The two problems of household labor with which the office is most intimately concerned—the supply and competency—are the only phases of the subject with which this chapter deals. The facts as presented may seem to discriminate against the employer, but the refusal to enter housework and to receive training must be studied from the employee's point of view, and, in this investigation, through the office.

The data which have been thus gathered may be grouped under three main heads—conditions for which offices are directly responsible, those for which they are indirectly responsible, and those over which they have practically no control. There is probably no large city in this country, unless it is in the South where the negro predominates, where the supply of household workers is equal to the demand, or where the length of service compares with that in other occupations. To the last statement there are many exceptions, for many of the employers reported “no servant trouble.” For some small measure of this insufficient supply, offices seem responsible, but competition in other lines of work and the encouragement of uneducated and unqualified girls by mercantile training schools to take up work for which they are not fitted, and the amount of immigration, are, indeed, conditions beyond their control. It is a safe estimate that fully three fifths of all household workers are placed by offices. Employers consider them their “mainstay” and “last resort,” and any proposal for their abolition would send consternation into thousands of householders’ hearts. Their work, with the possible exception of



the immigrant and negro ones and some of the reform enterprises, seems to be to exchange girls already in positions, rather than to develop facilities for increasing the number; and they maintain their control of the situation, by diverting the available supply from honest homes, so that a definite increase is never permitted. We believe that the investigation shows that if they did not encourage, and oftentimes compel girls to go into disreputable houses as employees or inmates, some of the cry of scarcity of household workers would disappear. The factory and the store take many girls from housework, but less cry is made about offices which send many thousands of girls into disreputable houses, where the good pay and easy times as employees spoil them for work in honest homes. The immense fees, gifts, and bribes which are offered make such houses the foe of the household and a danger to the employee. We further believe that for similar reasons some offices favor hotels and encourage many girls who prefer families to enter these and so spoil them for homes. When they object that they cannot go back to homes, the office replies, "Oh, we will get you a place later and you don't need to tell." But it does tell in both manner and character. In many instances girls prefer hotels, for the privileges are greater, but we also know many instances where they have been forced into them by offices which had "nothing else," and refused to return the fees.

By encouraging specialization, offices increase the demand. General houseworkers are fast disappearing, and only the unskilled workers will do all kinds

of work. It is a tendency of the times to specialize, but offices sometimes arbitrarily force this choice. When we applied for general housework, they voluntarily advised us to "ask for a position as waitress or maid even if you don't know how; it pays more"; or said, "You are a back number—you get much work and little pay in general housework." Some actually refused to get us positions, saying, "We do not deal with such second-class help"; and employers who asked for them were often scorned as "not having much of an establishment," and received little attention. This means that families which can afford but one employee are constantly urged to employ two, and wherever they yield, the available supply for other households is decreased. When a combined cook, chambermaid, and waitress becomes a waitress only, two others must be found to make up for the other two thirds, or the employer must "help out."

Unquestionably the treatment given employees in some offices, as shown in the opening chapter, drives girls away from housework. They have said: "We are treated like dogs in these offices—no wonder we'd rather go to factories"; or, "Nobody cares for a girl except for her money—we don't have to pay to get into stores"; or, "You know about the place where you are going when it's a factory that wants ye." One woman said she spent the good part of a year in an office looking for housework, and then "got a job in a day in a factory for nuthin." Some employer was looking for her; why did they not meet? There is but little about most offices to make girls feel the dignity or worth of household

work, and nothing which indicates that it may prove attractive.

The change in the nationality of immigrants is to a small degree influenced by these offices through their systems of importation. When it is remembered that New York has over two hundred Russian, Hungarian, Polish, Bohemian, and Jewish offices, and they and their many friends and relatives and neighbors are all influencing others to "come over," this becomes quite important. The Irish and Germans—desirable immigrants for households—are coming in much smaller numbers. The last report of the Commissioner of Immigration shows that for 1903 the number of female steerage passengers was: Austro-Hungarians, 58,027; Russians, 43,158; Germans, 15,225; Swedes, 16,220; and Irish, 19,334.

Advocates of the restriction of immigration have not sufficiently considered the effect upon the question of household work. Few American girls are willing to do the kind or amount of work which the immigrant does, and she is the "general houseworker," the "helper" of the present, and must be even more so of the future. Some Western communities and a few Eastern families claim to have solved the problem by employing Chinese labor, and advocates of unrestricted immigration might find this an argument against the attacks of trades unions.

At their worst, offices are only indirectly responsible for incompetency. They cannot compel a girl to take training, but they can prevent impositions by refusing to give false references and to recom-

mend girls whom they know to be unworthy. Because of the grade and conditions of offices many of the best employees will not patronize them. The preceding chapters have shown that some are training-schools for immorality, intemperance, deceptions, and vice, and hotbeds of gossip, so that no further comment upon them is needed.

It may be of interest to note that many employers who did not use offices wrote, saying they had no "servant problem," giving, as reasons, "They remain a long time," or, "many years"; "I secured my help through friends"; "My servants only leave to marry, and I have kept in touch with them after marriage for several years. My experience will not help you any except to prove that competent servants can be found"; "I cannot recall any grievances against servants, though we have many in the house"; "We have no trouble, we understand exactly the terms of the contract, and do not try to get something more, or different, out of each other"; "I have had so little trouble that I scarcely know how to answer these questions"; and, "Three of my maids are married and have called to show me their babies, and one says she feeds her children as I taught her, so they are not all bad, and while there are many trials there are a few compensations also." On the other hand, of those who patronized offices the length of service of girls was given as less than eighteen months, seventy-two replies; three years, seventeen replies; and two years, sixteen replies. Some said, "We have had so many servants we could not keep track of the time they stayed."

But there are other causes and explanations of

incompetency which the office cannot influence, and these are best seen in the attitude of employers and employees. Ideas of incompetency are such that offices cannot establish any standards or rules,—indeed in many cases they can scarcely understand them. Two requests—one overheard in the office, and the other made of us—show what some employers expect: “I want a waitress—just an ordinary one,” one said. Being an employer that day, we conversed and found that she required one who was “honest, neat, strong, quick, capable, earnest, willing, trained, good-tempered, nice-looking, not impertinent, sober, willing to resign all the attentions of men, religious, and willing to wear a cap.” Another who interviewed us wanted a sanctimonious-looking waitress for a family of ten, who would be willing to quote Scripture if requested when clerical guests were entertained; to sit on the back porch on Sunday evenings with Bible in hand, and be able to turn her eyes heavenward whenever the mistress and parson guests passed. We were assured, if thus capable, much would be overlooked and many gifts given.

Employers give, as reasons for incompetency, “lack of education and knowledge, carelessness, laziness, lack of experience in this country, and no special training.” One sums it up thus: “The want of skilled labor in anything like the proportion to the demand, want of any standard of excellence, unbusinesslike way in which women deal with their housekeeping, and want of any conscientiousness on the part of servants generally.” Over two thirds of them declare that the service is inferior to that in

former years, and that the advance in wages, in their experience, is twenty-five per cent.

Among the many suggestions which employers make for remedying the existing incompetency are some of interest. About three fifths are of the opinion that better school instruction would render better service. Out of thirty-nine replies, two thirds recommended training schools, and among their suggestions are included: "A training school with graded diplomas for servants, and one for employers instilling some common sense in both"; "as one who has grown gray and wrinkled from the worry of dealing with incompetent help, I beg to suggest that the only solution to our present unhappy state is a stricter requirement of servants. They should be trained, licensed, and tracked from place to place, so that all who run may read their record, and for this purpose the State should provide a system of employment bureaus"; "The trouble is in the hasty taking of people and failure to explain in advance the exact duties of the position. I think most ladies fail to systematize the work of a servant, especially for off-time and Sundays, and often get out with them at the start by not showing the manner of wishing work done or in finding fault at the wrong time"; "Offices have so many incompetents because the lady will take almost any one sooner than be without, even if she feels she will not keep her long, and the girls know it"; "Servants demand as much and give as little as they can; they are shiftless, spoil pots and pans, use quantities of material for cooking, waste coal, and throw away good food. Perhaps a profit-sharing scheme giving to the

servant a part of what she saved would work in such cases."

One makes the following classification :

"Help is the lowest class; servants, those who work under direction and are trained; and employees. The first have to make money somehow, but will only work as much as convenient. Their first thought is their holidays, and they leave their work any time to go on a jaunt. Servants are more faithful. If they are sick, one cares for them just as they do for a horse or cow; if they are only help they care for them as if they were charity cases. Employees supply their own tools, or you have to supply a special set for each one. They are paid for *their time* and leave at any stage and demand pay for what they have done, and for the time spent in coming and going. They might be useful for apartments. They demand damages for any injury in your house, but if a servant made such a demand it would disqualify them."

Another says: "A good servant carries out her employers' wishes and is faithful to their interests, and will not neglect them for her own affairs—no matter how important." Others say: "Recognize that they are working at a trade; pay the experts by the hour; let them share in the family life; give them the best labor-saving inventions; clearly define their duties; don't order suppers after the hired girl has ended her day's work; eliminate the talk about social superiority and recognize the servant as a human being worthy of consideration; teach ignorant mistresses that caprice is not popular with the women who sell their time for specific duties"; and, "If employers had more things to occupy their

minds, they would not magnify household troubles and exaggerate the evil."

One letter from a conservative employer is quoted entire, since it must prove to doubting employees that an employer can see their side and be sincere.

"The great difficulty we are now in has come mostly from mismanagement on the part of the ladies themselves—the good housekeepers are suffering from the ignorance of their lady friends more than the ignorance of these women. The late dinners, either at 7 P.M. or 8 P.M., deprive them of their evenings. The holidays due to the maids are given begrudgingly. The new American basement houses give no place for the maids to sit in when work is over, and very few housekeepers give their help a place to sit in beside the kitchen, where the cook does not wish them to be. The most lavish wages are given to incompetent maids and no recommendation required, or given them, so that dishonest women gain positions most anywhere.

"Old-fashioned housekeeping has become a lost art. The housekeeper should pass through each department of work once a day. The employee should be given her dues as to personal liberty—her sleeping quarters separated by a screen from her companions, if greater privacy is impossible. She should have a corner where she can wash, dress, and go to bed without inspection from the others. She should be able to go out one hour a day, and have one half-day a week for her own purposes, and every other Sunday free. She should be allowed to receive her own friends as callers at stated and convenient times to her employer. Unless all this is looked into and observed we shall continue to have second-class help in our kitchen, for decent, self-respecting women will not 'live out,' as they say, when treated without considera-



tion for their self-respect. When these reasonable privileges are given them, then the housekeeper should dismiss a girl for impertinence, for asking high wages until her work is worth it, for dishonesty, drinking, and unfaithfulness in her work. It is a poor rule that will not work both ways. If the employer treats her servants unjustly, they will fall short in their duties. These ranks of impertinent creatures that infest the intelligence offices have generally been trained into their ways by poor housekeepers. Bidley has been used to odd, dark corners, without daylight often, to work in, few holidays begrudgingly granted: her beau's visits are on area steps or sitting on the refrigerator in a small hallway, or out in the front 'airee,' or with legs dangling from the wash-tubs in a tiny kitchen. Her dishes are thick in piles, to wash up after nine o'clock at night, and she has a secret contempt for her mistress, who is 'shopping' all day, or 'out' from morning till night and often from night till morning. She, therefore, looks on the lady as one who knows little more than herself, but owes her position to money, not to mental superiority, simply luck gave them their positions—Bidley below and the Lady upstairs."

The emphasis upon the need of training for employees is marked, but it is clear that this is a matter which cannot be approached from the standpoint of the office. It is also clear that the need of training of employers is equally great, and one also which the office can never discuss. There can be no doubt that ignorance, false ideas, and inability to see the problem from any other than their own standpoint, or from a greater horizon than their own kitchen, or the experience with one or two girls, do discourage any desire for training. That there are such narrow

points of view is illustrated by one reply to the circulars sent out: "I can't see that there is any such big problem as you suggest. I have solved it by living on nuts and fruit, and having my work done out." How many families could do this?

From the employees' standpoint, incompetency is viewed differently. They say: "Employers don't want girls to know what their work is, for then they can get them to do anything," or, "They can't boss every minute if a girl knows her work," or, "You don't know how many people want things done 'my way' or 'mother's way,' even if it is all out of date and not suited to a modern house." One girl says: "I know ten different ways of doing chamberwork besides the one I learned at the trade school — that was money wasted." They say there is a "demand for skilled workers who are willing to learn a new way every day."

There are many explanations of incompetency and aversion to training. Many girls take housework as a makeshift, meaning to marry or change to some other occupation. Parents are sometimes at fault because they think what has been taught at home is sufficient. Others are suddenly thrust into the labor world and have neither money nor opportunity. Then the large immigrant class has no conception of the requirements of an American city home. One employer, in desperation, took a newly arrived Bohemian woman to her Brooklyn home. She could not speak one word of English, and the sign language was used entirely. Only by the most strenuous arguments and constant watching did they manage to keep her, for she insisted upon taking her

bath in the back yard, because it was the custom in her own country, where there were no second stories.

There is another class of girls, chiefly American and Irish, which is aggressively opposed to training. They say: "I can get just as good without it"; "Shure, now, why should I be l'arnin' when I kin shove me oar in anywhere and get a good job?" and half an hour later, she left for the Back Bay at \$5 per week. To the question, if they would study if instructions were free, fully one half frankly said "No," giving as their reasons that "it is a waste of time," that "we know enough for what we have to do"; that "if we knew more, more is expected for the same wages." Training schools cannot improve conditions unless girls will attend them, and we believe part of the fault lies in the school. The girls themselves partly explain the failure of training schools, when they say: "Those schools are not for us; no one ever finds out what we want to learn; they start out with a theory and everything must fit that, and we won't fit—that's all." Again, "If we want to be waitresses, or chambermaids, or general maids or laundresses, why cannot we learn that one thing? that's a profession just as much as sewing or typewriting; but no, they want us to spend half a year upon general preparation when we don't need it." The public is slow to realize this, and many employers insist upon their waitresses' and maids' knowing other things so as to "fill in." It seems that a distinction must be made between one who wants to study household work so as to direct employees or manage her own home, and

one who wants it as a trade. As a matter of fact, many of the patrons of these schools are girls who are about to be married, and others who are seeking instruction for purposes other than to become employees. The general-housework girl is still in demand and must be trained, and so must the specialist; and training schools do arbitrarily say to a girl that she must take a prescribed course, and if she cannot they lose all touch with her.

Selecting at random some half-dozen announcements of domestic training schools, we found that not one offered such a separate course as the employees asked for, or which could be completed within their idea of a reasonable time. Scarcely one offered instruction by women in touch with employees, though their names were familiar as writers and lecturers. These are not likely to understand the needs and attitude of ignorant, foreign, or awkward employees. Furthermore, two thirds of the courses noted were over the heads of the mass of women who are household workers. "Chemistry of cooking, household values, bacteriology, food manufacture" — what can these possibly mean to women who cannot read and write, who do not know one word of English, or one utensil from another? and Swedes, Germans, and others are literally shut out by language limitations. Employees, so far as they will admit they want training, insist that schools shall be conducted for them alone, the courses based upon their needs, and all idea of patronage removed. So long as employers run such schools simply from the point of view of bettering conditions in their own households they will fail,

for desirable girls seek training for themselves and their own economic welfare rather than with the idea of benefit to others.

Some time ago, the Woman's Educational and Industrial Union in Boston conducted such a training school, but it failed for lack of patronage. The Woman's Domestic Guild of New York opened a training school, with an expensive equipment and management, and has furnished lunches and other attractions, but they have not been well patronized. None of these schemes was based upon what the employee wished to study or enjoy, but upon what employers wanted or thought best. Some attractive features of training must be devised to reach employees.

From a close intimacy with employees in offices and from answers to the circulars there can be no question but that the conditions of household labor are responsible for about all that the offices are not, remembering, of course, that by character and training many girls are not fitted for household work. These conditions the office can influence only in the smallest degree. Whether it has any legitimate function in attempting to improve these conditions is an open question and certainly a profitable one for discussion. These conditions may be grouped under three heads: health, economics, and sociability.

There is a general impression that housework is more healthful than any other kind of occupation. Certainly in cities this assertion is open to grave doubts and has never been carefully studied. We had only to go a little way into the conditions in

boarding-houses to feel much less sanguine as to its truth. And, indeed, after visiting some homes, we felt even greater doubts. The conditions under which many thousands of houseworkers live in cities is indeed satisfactory, and far superior to that in tenement homes, but it is equally true that there are some tenements in which the conditions are far superior to those found in some fashionable boarding-houses and crowded apartments. Certainly the long hours, the averages for which appear later, and the kind of labor, such as frequent stair-climbing, or scrubbing on hands and knees, washing, or carrying large trays or heavy coal scuttles, do not necessarily constitute the most healthful work. A glance at the columns of advertisements reveals the fact that it is housework that invariably demands a "good, strong girl." Employees say "stair-climbing ten to twenty times a day is thought nothing of," and yet most women know that this is most injurious. In many instances we found girls working under an unusual physical strain, and yet shop girls and factory employees have received the legislation for hours, seats, and sanitation because of the fond belief that housework regulates itself. A few comparisons have been made of healthful conditions in the factory and household, and they do not favor the latter so much as would be expected. A recent study by an experienced observer shows that housework is not necessarily good all-round work, and that among such employees weak backs, and women's diseases are prevalent.

In the matter of healthful exercise, housework has scarcely been questioned. We doubt if in many

other occupations this consists of anything less desirable than washing in steaming rooms and going directly into the open air. Certainly breathing the dust from sweeping and beating rugs would not be advocated as an ideal form of exercise. Then there are employees, thousands of them, who do not go out of the house between their "times off." How does this compare with the vigorous outdoor walk which a factory girl must take to her car or to her home each day? The great majority of employers stipulate that the rest time of an employee must be spent in the house, and one employer said, where we were filling a position; "Why, I should want you a dozen times if I thought you were out of the house." This was in response to a simple request for a walk around the block. Another said, "A walk during the afternoon! Don't she get enough doing work?" But every one will admit that recreation implies at least change and usually separation from work. The average healthy woman knows that two or three consecutive days in the house without outdoor walks or drives, or social contact, or at least outdoor breathing, make her depressed, restless, and oftentimes irritable. This is not a question of mistress and maid, but of nerves and muscles and bodily functions, which no one has yet found to be different for different social classes. Certainly housework as performed in the average home cannot rank high in view of what science and experience are teaching of the best forms of exercise, and certainly play and games, the greatest of all recreations, are totally eliminated from the houseworker's sphere. The factory and store girls have these in their

working girls' club, settlement gymnasium, or recreation centre.

"Food of the houseworker is far superior to that of the factory girl!" This is also a matter which has not been carefully studied and is open to serious question. There are many thousands of homes where employees get very good food, but there are also thousands of homes where factory employees get it. Girl after girl in good offices advised us against taking positions which were "all right except the food." In many small families employing one or two employees they are given "what is left." The housekeeper usually tries to provide enough, but when an unexpected guest arrives, or for other reasons there is not enough, it is the employee who goes without. Many of them say frankly, "We do not get enough of the kind of food we need." The custom of the house sometimes works hardship for the employee. The breakfast may consist of cereals, toast, and coffee. To the girl accustomed to a very different plan this may well seem insufficient for a hard morning's work. When there is an abundance of food, the kind does not always meet the needs of the girl. Meat may be only an occasional luxury, while salads and other foods, to which a girl may not be accustomed, and to which her system will not readily adjust itself, predominate. Some large households, especially where there are housekeepers, buy two grades, one for the family, and one for the employees, of such articles as tea, coffee, sugar, and meats, and some employees have said to others while waiting: "We buy our own tea there"; or, "We could n't keep the place; they



found out we bought our own things because the stuff given us was so bad." Careful inquiry reveals the fact that this separate buying is a prevalent custom. Unless the employee herself provides against it, food is often cold, and the tendency is to "fill up on tea and coffee and bread and butter." Employers will ask us: "What do you expect?" And we must reply: "You want to attract the girl from the factory and store; if she does not like her food, she changes or supplements it."

One woman who has kept an office for many years in New York and has heard many stories from girls said: "The chief reason why good girls are so scarce is because they receive such poor food, and not enough of that; there is very little variety, especially in houses where two distinct tables are run. They don't want delicacies, but a variety of good, plain food." It is not the purport of this chapter to suggest remedies, and these facts are given simply as elements in the health problem, and must be considered, for they are matters which are weighed by employees.

There can be no question but that defective sanitation and heat cause many girls to leave homes otherwise good. It is a common occurrence to find that the only room in a house or apartment having no heat is that for the employee. One employer for five years could keep no one in winter, but steadfastly refused to recognize this as a cause. Some rooms are in basements, having no sunlight or heat. One employer complained to us that her last girl was not neat and clean, and she hoped we were, and then showed us our room, which was partitioned off

from the coal-bin and could not have been kept clean under any conditions! And she insisted there was no connection between the two! The overcrowding is in many instances serious, and certainly girls can have no privacy in many rooms which the writer has seen. Bathing facilities are frequently restricted or are made so hard that girls do not care. We were offered laundry tubs for a bath, which only a good athlete could have used, and which would have been impossible for a two-hundred-pound cook.

Cleanliness of bed-clothing and rooms is so neglected in some good homes that some tenements would shine beside them. One cook told us she was obliged to furnish her own mattress, as the one given her was filthy beyond description, and the family had no sense of pride about it. In some small basement rooms we found from two to six people, and in houses with good systems we found there were no regulations as to change of linen in "servants' quarters." They did it "when they got ready." In apartment houses they are frequently crowded in at the top of the house, and men and women live together with no small amount of freedom, but those who know the value of conventionalities appear none the less shocked when their "girls go astray." The protection afforded girls in many homes is far inferior in many ways to that in factories and stores, and is the more hopeless because it is steadfastly assumed that they are protected. In flats and crowded apartments the employees' rooms often open off the kitchen, and are frequently upon airshafts and have no other light or ventilation, and

are so small that tenements are often not worse. Sleeping-rooms so near the kitchen are not good for the family or employee, and yet no one protests against the kind of quarters which are designed for household workers in most new apartment houses.

The economic conditions include those which are more familiar because most of the studies have been along this line. It can be truly said that in a general way wages are no limitation upon the supply. All previous investigations and the employees admit that they are paid more than in factories and shops. We found that the only way in which wages markedly affected the supply was in their non-payment. Some employers make a practice of keeping employees a few weeks or months and then discharging them without pay. Many women who run boarding-houses get their "help" in this way. As most of their possessions are exempt by law, an action usually results in inability to collect. Girls have said: "I quit housework 'cause I could n't get my money"; or, "Mistresses cheat so." When a girl is green she is glad to get anything, and so accepts half or two thirds of that due her. We had only to consult the records of Women's Protective Associations and Legal Aid Societies to verify this. In 1891, in Boston, an investigation conducted by some trades unions revealed that "out of 128 complaints, eighty-two were of household employees for wages, and that some of the individual accounts were as high as \$600 or \$700." A member of a Woman's Protective Association said: "You would be surprised at the rank of the families who 'keep up appearances' on just such methods, and who com-

promise or settle when we go to them because they can't afford such notoriety."

The lack of system and of arrangement of work seems to be one of the greatest means of limiting the supply. An investigation in Boston in 1898 revealed that the average daily working time, exclusive of Sundays and the day out, was 11.25 hours. This included both "busy and call time." A more recent inquiry showed a minimum of  $7\frac{1}{2}$  hours and a maximum of  $15\frac{1}{2}$  hours daily; another gives the average as a fraction over twelve hours daily, with a maximum of sixteen; and in another, based upon both employers' and employees' statements, the former gave the daily average as 9.05 hours, and the latter as 12.12 hours. Allowing for exaggeration on both sides, the average of these brings it somewhere near the results obtained in Boston. In the volume on *Domestic Service*, Professor Salmon states that 37.66 per cent. work ten hours, and 36.96 per cent. more than ten hours. We found very few who would admit that they worked less than ten hours. Many employees say that "call time" is no rest and corresponds to the way girls work in stores. They are not busy every minute every day, but they are "always ready to be" and that "prevents interest and enjoyment in anything but a trashy novel you can drop anywhere." A general average places the daily working time at about twelve hours.

Were the hours the same as in factories, stores, and offices, there are restrictions upon free time which seem to be almost unsurmountable barriers. This is due as much to the custom of the family as to real necessities. They include such as, where an

employee may go, time of return, whether she shall receive calls, etc. There are also many interferences, and sometimes the delay of an hour in the regular time out makes the girl's plan impossible. More than one half of the employees talked with said that the length and indefiniteness of hours, and absence of any real compensation for overtime prevented their entering households. A thing of no value to the employer, as a cast-off hat, a desirable girl does not consider as a compensation for an extra hour or two, although the spirit in which it is offered is a recognition of her right. In answer to the question of employers what demands they considered unreasonable, there were many bearing on hours, such as, "unreasonable evening hours," "too many social functions and holidays," "insisting on holidays and hours when there is illness in the family," "out after 10.30 without permission," "night keys so they could come in at any hour," "that visitors should stay later than ten o'clock," "not ask permission but just going out on regular days."

Investigations show beyond a doubt that employees do not have as much free time as those in other fields. They have one afternoon and Sunday afternoon usually, though it is frequently three or four o'clock before they can leave. They may have one evening, but more than this they must secure by special request. Employees in the stores may be detained a little on busy days, but they are so dressed that they can go out to dinner or to the theatre from there. Then the houseworker must ask permission to be out late. In addition the tendency is to give shopworkers an additional after-

noon in summer, so they have for at least part of the year one afternoon, all day Sunday,—with the much coveted morning rest,—and all their evenings each week, and, what is more than all this, they do absolutely as they please with this time. Housework must compete with these conditions or offer attractive substitutes before it can draw upon stores and factories for its employees.

We inserted in one of the leading papers an advertisement for a chambermaid in a boarding-house, wages good, but nothing was said about privileges or references. We received just five indefinite illiterate replies. Then we inserted a similar advertisement, but added, "no other work, evenings free, state experience, and enclose references," and we received fifty-four replies, about which there were some interesting things. Many of them—over one half—came from women who had not done housework before, but were in their own homes and stated that that was their only experience. The reasons given for applying were such as "death of parents"; "rented rooms"; or "ran boarding-houses and failed"; "illness of husband"; and "small children dependent upon her"; "present position involved too much responsibility"; and that a "position giving evenings would enable her to care for her child." One was from a nurse who found "the care of invalids too confining," another from a woman who had "the daughter of a friend in her charge to find work for," and a third wanted to know "if my husband and child can board at the house, as I wish to help along with expenses and he is not very well." Some, who were doing day's work, thought

it would be steadier, and others who had no experience were "willing to learn." Another fact was that several were from small towns many miles away, from women who wanted to come to the city. Answers from those in the city were usually from good neighborhoods. They showed that most of the writers were possessed of fair education, and the number of personal references offered was extremely gratifying—being addresses and telephone numbers of former employers and friends. In a small way this shows that improved conditions attract a better quality of employees.

A few girls included impossibility of promotion as an objection, and said there was but little increase of wages, unless they changed places. As compared with other occupations this is unquestionably true. This partly explains why hotels and large households often secure better houseworkers, for they do offer some such opportunity. Offices, stores, and factories recognize this and always hold out at least the inducement of a rise, but the small household can at best only increase wages.

The kind of work is often a drawback, especially when it is general housework. Many say it is harder, more confining, and more objectionable than factory work. While waiting in a good office a well-dressed employer came in and asked for a girl for general housework. She seemed somewhat irritated when told they were scarce, and said, "Well, I want a girl not afraid of work, one who can bring in coal and wash skylights and tend the furnace and chop wood. She does n't have to do it in my house, but I want her to know how—that's my principle. I

am all right to live with if a girl will work, but I am the devil to get along with if she won't." Employees complain of the constant change in work. When they go to a new place it's "do it all some other way," or their work is gradually increased.

Most employees insist that the privileges granted do not compensate for other conditions. They consider, extra free time, single rooms, medical care, use of books and magazines, use of bathroom and sewing-machine, seat at table, tickets to entertainments, use of dining-room or a sitting-room, vacations, having pets, frequent callers, and any time over the usual stipulation as privileges. Many things regarded as such are common, everyday rights which they obtain in other labor. Many said they preferred less wages and more privileges, if they had a choice.

In answer to the question, "What privileges do you consider unreasonable?" fully one third of the 350 employers said that their "servants made no unreasonable demands"; and some added: "They have been with us many years"; or, "We remember they are not living at home, so we give them special privileges"; or, "We live in the country, and besides their regular time we give them an afternoon in the city once each month with fare both ways"; or, "I keep a bank account and pay six per cent. interest on all their savings." The other replies in answer to what demands were unreasonable in order of frequency were:

"objection to children; doing no work other than engaged for; too much company, men callers; breaking dishes without deduction; right to cast-off clothing;



excessive church-going, personal untidiness; request early leaving of dining-room so could entertain callers; specified foods; that the mistress keep out of the kitchen; money willed for long and faithful service; pensions; eat with the family; travel in Europe; cook not wanting to clean the kitchen; waitresses refusing to do fine linen; removal of other inharmonious servants, waiting on children, refusing to do things in the way requested; sudden leave of absence with no substitutes; use of food for entertaining friends; and using machine without asking."

Carelessness in making definite contracts was shown, in a preceding chapter, to influence length of service. These are a necessity before employees will feel sure about places. In a factory they know the hours, wages, and kind of work. We have been engaged, when everything we thought we had understood was contradicted by the employer when we reached her home. In the volume of labor legislation there is practically none for the house-worker. It is about the only occupation without legal limitations and organization. It thus lacks both protection and dignity in the eyes of girls seeking occupations. "Rights," as every employer knows, is a favorite word with employees, but there are hundreds of households where such a word would not be tolerated, except in the matter of wages. One male employer says, "I have all the time and energy and brains of my valet and he gets his wages." No other occupation can afford such luxuries except from its organizers, promoters, and profit-sharers.

Hotels, large households, and occasionally an

office like the Woman's Educational and Industrial Union of Boston sometimes insist upon written contracts, but in the case of hotels they are often one-sided. Here is a fair sample of one in a prominent New York hotel, and found in other cities.

"I agree to work by the day at the monthly rate named below, and further agree that this contract will terminate by my resignation or discharge at any time during the month without notice on either side, and I further agree that if at any time during my employment my employer shall desire to search my person, trunk, clothing, and effects I will submit to such examination without objection and hereby waive all claims for damages on account of such examination."

Nothing is said about breakage, but on the back, out of sight, are the columns "breakage, absence, cash, balance." Some girls not knowing the customs and being unable to protest, have told us that the exorbitant rates at which breakage was charged up, especially to green girls, cost them all their wages. Proprietors must protect themselves, but do not need *all* of the protection.

The social conditions which limit the supply are quite as important as the economic ones. Most important is loneliness. Some have a marked aversion to going into a house where there is but one employee. It means they must work alone, eat alone, sit alone, and there is no loneliness so great as where one can observe the happy social life of others and yet have no part in it. Even when an employer is friendly an employee cannot be naturally social in

her own way. Such a relationship is forced, and though we may not understand what to them is a "good time," we must appreciate that we can at least offer no substitutes. A fair girl returned to an office from which she had been sent to an excellent home on the outskirts of Boston. When asked why she came back, she said, "Oh, it was a big house in a big grounds and no one was home and the only other servant was so deaf she could not hear a thing and it seemed so dreary I knew I just could n't stand it." The wages offered were unusually good. To many girls the possibility of companionship is often the sole determining factor.

There are, of necessity, restrictions upon the number of callers an employee may have, and some employers object to men, not realizing that this practically throws the girl upon the street for such companionship unless she is fortunate enough to have a home. This desire for male company is considered undesirable, but home-makers must realize how fundamental is this desire of most women for a home and children. Employers constantly complain: "Servants will not go where there are children." Are women who are indifferent to all attractions of men likely to prove fond of children? Employees are unanimous in saying that under present conditions they attract only inferior men, and it is not necessarily for personal reasons, for many go away in summer and conceal their occupation, or go into different occupations, and this is changed at once. As women rise in grade of housework or change to higher occupations, just in that degree do they attract more skilled workers

among men. This inability to get desirable men for company must not be underestimated. One employee writes, "We want to marry as well as any one else, but we can't get the respect of a man when we have to visit down cellar, or when we must sit on the back steps." The fact that employees pay intelligence offices for the privilege of entertaining friends there, shows that there is a real need, and no amount of wages or other privileges will induce employees to leave factories and stores for such prospects. Not many employers would make similar sacrifices, and yet women's inclinations and natures are much the same.

Necessarily in households there are restrictions upon the hospitality which employees may extend, and the places in which they must receive their friends are sometimes such as to humiliate a girl of the dullest sensibilities. Personal independence is interfered with, and, as one girl says, "We are bossed eternally; they ask us where we are going, where we have been, and what we did, and who our friends are"; and one employer said she discharged her girl for lying to her about where she spent the evening." An employee writes: "Our employer feels, somehow, that she is our guardian and has the right to supervise all incomings and outgoings, to question us about what we do in our leisure, and to be 'mistress' as well as employer. All this meddling is usually kindly meant, but none the less it reduces us from the status of a free employee to that of a vassal." This loss of personal independence is a real grievance. They have no choice of food or places to sleep, of what they will wear indoors, of how the

work is to be done, or of hours. One employer says:

"In engaging help my greatest difficulty is to get a girl willing to stay at home evenings. A girl cannot do her work well unless she has the proper amount of sleep and rest, but it is almost impossible to make a servant eelf that the woman is her friend who won't let her run every night. Why, because a girl is a servant, she should be allowed to run the streets all hours of the night, I can't understand."

The factory says to the girls "Unless you do your work well, you lose your position"—but nothing more. But in manufacturing communities we find women regulating this themselves, and social functions, as dances, suppers, etc., falling on Friday and Saturday nights, and quieter visiting during the week. But the housekeeper says, "*You cannot* run the streets, because *I do not think* you do your work well." The modern economic tendency among women shows that if the better quality of women are to go into household work personal independence must remain conditional only upon the quality, regularity, and necessities of work, not upon others' opinions or theories of life.

One of the most common complaints is that employees are ungrateful and that they leave when employers are good to them. One employer says, "I found on careful thought that all my goodness came back to me, and that for every old thing I gave my girl I had taken an hour or more from her regular free time, and I feel now that she had a right to change, though I was ten years seeing it."

Household workers are subjected to indignities and familiarity. They get the benefit of uncontrolled tempers and bad dispositions, while a girl in a store, by the publicity of her position, is often spared the worst. There are marks of inferiority which distinguish only the household workers. We have heard many good employees refuse places because caps and aprons were required. We have previously referred to the use of the first name and intrusive questions, and we are convinced that with many these are vital considerations. Some have given up their places because of the familiarity of male members of the family—a position rendered more dangerous than those in stores by reason of the isolation. Undesirable workers have admitted going into housework because it gave them better opportunities to meet men.

There is no occupation where there is so little organized social life. Institutions have tried to form clubs, but employees do not want patronage, so much as the facilities for starting their own societies. This lack of organization is due to different grades of workers, different nationalities, and to isolation and lack of time. In Boston, the Young Women's Christian Association conducts a club which meets at its rooms Thursdays and is fairly successful, but not spontaneous. All other working girls have their organizations; they are invited to vacation homes, and their working girls' clubs are a success, but there are almost no household workers found among them.

As a closing comment upon the inability to induce factory and shop girls to go into households

we refer to the report of the Woman's Educational and Industrial Union of Boston, which made a systematic effort to get into touch with working women. Five hundred and sixty-four women were reached, and made aware of the movement to interest them. The material gathered shows that

"hours by length and indefiniteness were a tremendous drawback, likewise the industrial isolation and social stigma. It would be lonely for a woman of intellectual resources and, to those used to companionship of the shop, impossible. Nearly one fourth of the shop women spoke of their loss of independence, and some shrank from the idea of a woman employer; others said housework was too hard and that washing and ironing was impossible. Only a few really disliked housework, but added that a little more pay was no inducement. In brief, the result suggests no hope of rejection, by shop and factory, of their work in favor of housework, excepting under unusual circumstances."

Though 564 women were notified, there were but thirty-six applicants, and twelve of these were charity cases who could get no work, and seven others were not girls changing from factories. Only three were successfully placed and remained in their positions, and of these the report says, "One was a Russian tailoress who was forced to abandon her work on account of her eyes; one was a telephone operator who could not stand the nervous strain, and the third gave up the factory to escape the extra duties imposed upon her at home." These three alone, out of the 564 women, remained in service.

The report concludes: "Emphasis must be laid upon interesting and awakening the employers. Widespread interest would culminate in specific changes, and *bit by bit* domestic service would become a possible alternative to the shop and factory."



## CHAPTER VII

### NEW MOVEMENTS AND REMEDIES

Sources of information : Visits to the institutions, correspondence with managers, and reports.

THE public has not been content to accept the conditions described, and there are many movements which indicate a new spirit in intelligence offices and household work. This chapter can set forth only the most important and significant of these.

The Woman's Educational and Industrial Union, organized in Boston in 1880, is, we believe, the most representative and progressive association which deals with the problem of household work. Unlike most other institutions, its membership is open to employers and employees alike, and its purpose is to "increase fellowship among women." The work of this organization, which occupies and owns its building, is in the hands of four departments—Business Management, Education and Industrial Arts, Social Extension, and Social Service—and each department has several committees. It has an ethics, a lecture, a class, a hygiene, a food, a handwork, an employment, a protective, a befriending, and a hospitality committee. It has an exchange for work, lunch-rooms, lecture-rooms,

and everything which makes for unity of work among women. The branch of this remarkable institution which deals with employment is the Domestic Reform League. Its objects are the scientific and careful consideration of present conditions; the awakening of the interest of women in the largest aspect of the problem; the recognition by the employer that fair conditions should be given for faithful service; and by the employee, that interested and efficient service should be rendered for fair wages and just conditions; and the further recognition by both that efficiency should be the standard of wages. This League has charge of the employment agency, and the use of it is restricted to its members, this being one of its ways of securing certain standards. The distinctly progressive movements for which this League stands are: a form of contract which employer and employee must sign containing the names of the parties, the wages and kind of employment, with the conditions that the first week is a trial week, for which the employer pays unless the employee leaves of her own will; that the employee is entitled to a full week's notice or full week's pay, and if the employee leaves without one week's notice, one week's pay is forfeited. When either employer or employee violates this contract, the use of the office is withdrawn. No employer or employee is called by any other title.

In addition, this League has done most of the little research on household problems, which has been undertaken at first hand. This includes a study of the "Hours of Labor," of "Social Conditions of Domestic Service," "Household

Expenses," and "Social Statistics of Working Women." It also made the investigation of employment agencies which resulted in Boston's present excellent law. It has arranged series of lectures and, until recently, conducted a domestic training school. Its experience has demonstrated that a study of conditions followed by educational work for employers and employees, in connection with an ideal office to bring employers and employees together, is more in demand than a training school. This institution is, in the judgment of the writer, the most advanced in its methods of dealing with this problem, for it is a practical clearing-house for labor, and an educational centre.

A movement which has sprung up recently in other cities consists of employers' associations, which have opened employment agencies. A comparatively recent one is the Woman's Domestic Guild of America movement in New York and Chicago. These organizations, and others which they typify, are, in a general way, effected by a body of employers banding together, electing officers, and having a board or council. They select a manager or superintendent who is responsible for the actual working of the office. Employers who are patrons must be members of the association, but employees are not eligible. The former pay an annual membership fee of \$2, and are charged \$1 additional for each employee obtained. Fees of \$1 are also charged employees. In New York the Guild can scarcely be called an employers' organization, since its board of employers has resigned and it is now in the hands of business men and women.

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These organizations have good office equipment, fair waiting-rooms and systems, and use printed reference blanks returnable by mail. To the writer it seems that these Guilds have introduced three doubtful movements, the training school—which has been discontinued in New York because of lack of patronage—an honor roll, whereby all employees who remain in places one year will have their names published in a newspaper, and will have their \$1 fee refunded as a prize; and that the membership fee paid entitles the subscriber to one hundred copies of the newspaper whose advertising medium the office is. The progressive movements for which these Guilds stand are the social and recreation opportunities which they afford through their classes and club-rooms. These Guilds are strictly business concerns, advertising methods of enterprising newspapers, and are not philanthropies.

They have been well advertised, are new, and have drawn the trade from other offices, and as clearing-houses they are a benefit and a success. But they seem to fail in many particulars where the Woman's Educational Union succeeds, because they are not conducted in the spirit which a solution of the "servant problem" demands. As educational centres for the study and solution of the problem, they are not even to be considered. This is due to the following elements: They emanate from employers, are financed by them, and are conducted entirely with a view to bettering the service in the homes. They represent more often the employers who have more than one employee, so the great mass of employers have no voice in determining the

policy. They are one-sided, and can only see the problem from the employer's standpoint, though there are also many competent employees with good educations who could bring into such an organization a broader policy if they were given representation. As a rule, they do not recognize the scope and character of the matter they assume to settle. Such an organization to meet the conditions, needs a board composed of employers, employees, and business men and women, for any organization conducted only from the standpoint of the employer tends to develop personalities.

The system is one of patronage and misses the dominant note in all women's work. The girl in the factory or store asks for fairness in privileges, hours, amount of freedom, and for protection, and the houseworker is not different from her. As one writer puts it: "Working women want, not charity, but companionship; not alms, but amusement; not bodily needs, but genuine personal relations. Social patronage, they shun as social pestilence." What self-respecting, desirable girls who have the capabilities for good houseworkers will leave a store or shop when such organizations offer as an inducement cash prizes and an honor roll published in a newspaper! They say, "We would be held up to ridicule by our friends, and this would be humiliating"; and that the store and the shop reward faithful service by increased pay, more holidays, and promotions. These are substantial and contribute to their comfort and happiness, which is, after all, the chief aim of most workers. These Guilds further show a system of patronage by permitting employers to become

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“members” with special privileges, while the employee is but a “servant”—not a discrimination designed to attract women from other fields.

Employers' organizations have many obstacles to overcome before they can become thoroughly businesslike. Members think they have a special claim and ask all sorts of special privileges or favors, or they send all the cripples and inefficient that come their way to them, in the hope that they will be given work, and to them this is an easy way to dispense charity. There must be a constant vigilance against favoring individual employers. They can rarely become co-operative with other intelligence offices, and can scarcely get into touch with the supply, because the conservative members are opposed to the methods required. The New York Guild says: “We have nothing to do with immigrants or their offices; they will scarcely do for our patrons”—an exclusive attitude which will prevent co-operative and educational work. Some of these, while poor, only need some help to act honestly. The keynote of every modern business now is co-operation, as is seen by other employers' associations, trusts, etc., yet this newest movement is not only competitive, but has actually refused co-operation. The Guild in Chicago is, we believe, on a more enlightened basis, and has shown a greater tendency to co-operate.

There is a further danger in employers' associations run as advertising schemes. They are misleading. The Guild openly advertises to “solve the servant problem,” and raises the hopes of thousands of women. The study of this problem, brief as it

is here, certainly shows that it is too deep and complex for any medium of exchange to solve. These Guilds do not increase the supply—they draw it from other offices, and for many households they supply, some applicant at some other office goes without. Where increased advertising is one of the objects of an agency financed by a newspaper, its methods may be open to question. Every application is advertised. This means that if there are twenty people waiting for a cook, and one applies and is taken at once, she is nevertheless advertised to draw other eager employers. Were this not true, the papers would not make a presentable advertising sheet in the number of positions wanted.

Some employers' associations have adopted better methods. The Household Registry Bureau, operated by the Housekeepers' Alliance of Philadelphia, with the co-operation of the *Public Ledger* is upon much better plans. It has the faults of the Guild in that it has not represented on its board any but employers, and is open to the danger of one-sidedness. But it has not fallen into the error of starting a training school, its applicants are employers and employees, it supports a home for the unemployed, which is also a recreation centre, and is co-operating with the best offices in the city. It modestly claims it is only a respectable intelligence office operating in the hope of bringing employers and employees together, and not to solve the problem. It insists upon references, whether employers want them or not, and does not hesitate to refuse employers when beyond question they are known as undesirable. It has private-interview rooms where

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employers must converse with employees, and men and women are separated. It has no honor roll, but every one is made to feel the obligation of contract, and a broken agreement by either employer or employee means that she must patronize some other office. Its success is measured not by the number it places, but by such things as: "How many girls can we induce to remain when they wish to leave their places for trivial reasons"; "how can we induce patrons to be more just in their treatment and demands"; and "put the girl in the right place if it is only one each week."

A distinctly progressive movement, though only small experiments as yet, are the Household Aid Company of Boston, and the St. Louis School of Housekeeping. The former is on a daily service plan. There is one house where the girls are trained, and from which they are sent out to homes to work upon regular schedules at stated wages per hour. Applicants are received upon two weeks' probation with no expense to themselves, and at the end of that time they are graded according to efficiency, and each makes a contract with the company for a definite number of hours a week. During the time of training, the wages amount to about four dollars per week. From this a moderate amount for room and board is deducted. After the period of training is over, they receive from eight to thirty-five cents per hour. After the training is completed, aides continue to live at the home while at work. The Company arranges the schedules and at present receives the money and repays the aides. Cooks, household managers, seamstresses,



milliners, laundresses, buyers and marketers, upholstresses and clerks are furnished. They have an arrangement of major and minor subjects, so that a girl whose engagements for household work cover only certain periods of the day may go out for millinery and sewing, thus making it possible to utilize the whole day.

The St. Louis scheme is a little broader. Its plan is to give the first two weeks' trial training without pay. The first two months are devoted to general work, and the last four to specializing. The pupils may board and lodge at the School. After the first two months, they are sent out for emergency service, for which they are paid. This emergency service is the filling of temporary vacancies. If workers give all of their time to this emergency department, they are paid a good salary whether sent out or not. If they are sent out so often that they earn more than their fixed salaries, they are paid an additional percentage. Regular schedules, as in the Boston Household Aid, do not appear to be made. Besides this, the School conducts an excellent employment agency, which the Boston Company does not.

These experiments are along truly progressive lines. The courses are possibly too long, but both overcome a grave difficulty by making it possible for girls to earn wages while they are learning. To avoid the objectionable feature of patronage, employers and business men and women should be members of these boards, and the aides should be made to feel that they run the lodging houses, so far as that is practicable.

The Young Woman's Christian Association of

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Boston typifies a movement a little less new. This is a training school which eliminates the daily-service plan, but which extends its training to employees who are in positions, and sends instructors into employers' homes when requested. The Association also has an employment agency which is one of the best in the city in its principle and equipment.

There are in existence some training schools which do not operate employment agencies, such as the School of Domestic Arts and Sciences in Chicago. These schools do improve the conditions by training prospective and existing employers, but can scarcely be said to influence the subject through the employee. The extension of training schools for employers and of the work in schools and higher institutions is one of the most hopeful and progressive lines by which employers can hasten the adjustment, but that is a problem which is distinct from employment, which is the keynote of this investigation.

One training school which seems at least to have solved the problem of how to secure pupils is the Sargent Industrial School at Matteawan, N. Y. This was founded by Mrs. Winthrop Sargent in her old manor house in 1891, and now there are six resident pupils and more than two hundred day pupils with a waiting list of one hundred more. The object is to give free instruction in all departments of housekeeping only to those who intend to adopt household work as a profession. The afternoon classes are for girls from the public schools, and the evening classes for girls from the factories. Courses range from nine months for resident pupils upward

to five years, and the hours are so adjusted that the work can be carried along with the public-school work. There are also classes in physical culture. Prizes are offered, honorable mention made, and testimonials and certificates are given showing the amount of study completed. Those who find training schools a failure might investigate with profit the methods by which such a large attendance is secured.

Another movement is the laundry operated by the Charity Organization Society of New York City. Several hundred women—widows and deserted wives who are breadwinners for little children, and wives who support invalid husbands—were graduated last year as expert laundresses. The laundry is a trade school. It receives eighty or ninety unskilled women every month, puts them at work over steaming wash-tubs, advances them to starching and ironing, and graduates them with a recommendation after thorough instruction in the ironing of filmy lace curtains and finest linen. While the woman learns her trade, she receives a warm dinner at noon, and from sixty cents to \$1.50 a day, paid at five every afternoon, so that she can go to a day nursery for her children with money in her pocket to buy their supper. Single women are not admitted. It accepts laundry from patrons, so the instruction is entirely practical. The finding of employment is secondary and the training is the main work.

As a result of the conditions found existing for immigrant girls, a model agency for immigrants has been started, known as the Home Co-operative Bureau at 712 East Sixth Street, New York. There

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is a woman at the immigrant station who meets the Hungarian, Slavish, Bohemian, Jewish, and other immigrant women, and not only directs them to this agency and home, but finds relatives and friends and prevents them from falling into the hands of office sharks. No fees are charged the employees, and no charge is made for lodging while they wait for positions unless they can pay. Clubs and classes are conducted at this home and it is a social centre for the household employees and others. Situated in the midst of many questionable offices and in a densely populated section, it has an attractive office and good system; clean, comfortable, even tastefully arranged rooms where unemployed women can stay; it has a matron who does social and educational work with its patrons and neighbors; it uses its influence to assist all other reputable offices; it co-operates in the stamping out of the evils; and secures protection for employees. It is a small beginning by those who realize the great need of better housing and more social opportunities for the houseworker.

There are some movements among private pay offices which are progressive, in that they serve the better convenience of the public rather than solve any whole problem. Such is the purchasing department of the Woman's Domestic Guild. One called a "Bureau of Social Requirements" undertakes the following things: designing and superintending entertainments; information on all social matters and customs, including the etiquette of cards and invitations; visiting books written up; household accounts kept in order and visiting housekeepers

supplied. It also furnishes visiting stenographers and amanuenses; accountants by the hour, day, or season; suggestions and advice in matters of dress and interior decorations; shopping; mourning addresses; seamstresses and milliners; and selected addresses. It gives advice and assistance in heraldic matters; armorial bearings are authenticated; genealogical researches are conducted by experts; and has information concerning schools and public institutions. Dismantling and opening of residences, recommendations of architects, improvements and alterations in buildings, daily care of lamps; orders for hair-dressing, shampooing, and manicuring; bric-a-brac dusted, plants cared for, orders executed for coal, trunks packed and re-packed,—all these are taken charge of. It also has a real-estate department, and furnishes letters of advice and introduction, and chaperones. In fact, it undertakes to supply every household and social demand. Another announces that its proprietor is a "visiting household manager and general provider," and undertakes to relieve patrons of every department of household care. It includes most of the preceding and some new departures, as, securing apartments and houses for out-of-town parties, and houses furnished by contract. A third organization in New York City operates a "platoon system," which furnishes employees on the daily-service plan. They work on regular schedules, much as trained nurses, from house to house, or upon short-hour shifts.

But all of these movements are independent and for cities like New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, and many others, where there are laws to

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be enforced, and standards to be raised, the writer believes there is a need for a co-operative movement, and, based upon these investigations and a careful study of office systems, that best calculated to attain the end desired is the one proposed in the following outline:

Consistent with the belief that these offices cannot solve the household-work problem, the first part of the plan provides for a study of the existing conditions. A plan has been perfected in which the Woman's Educational and Industrial Union, with offices at 264 Boylston Street, Boston, the Association for Household Research, of New York, with offices at 111 East Twenty-third Street, and the Housekeepers' Alliance, and the Civic Club, with offices at 1325 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, have united and will conduct such an investigation in these three cities. Co-operating with these are the College Settlements Association and Association of Collegiate Alumnæ which furnish a fellowship for the research. The representatives from these organizations constitute the Inter-Municipal Committee on Household Research, of which the president of the Woman's Educational and Industrial Union, Mrs. Mary Morton Kehew, is Chairman, and Miss Frances A. Kellor, the Fellow, is general Secretary. This Committee has charge of general plans and of the direction, so that the work in all cities will be uniform and the results comparable as well as representative. But each city has its own large local committee which carries out the details, conducts the bureau, and otherwise supports the work.

The investigation in each city will be directed

from a bureau of information, established by and in connection with the organizations represented on the Inter-Municipal Committee. Organizations, employers and employees, and all interested will be asked to co-operate, by sending to this bureau experiences, opinions, criticisms, suggestions, experiments, and proposed solutions. Trained investigators will be sent out to collect material by means of observation, interviews, schedules of questions, etc. Previous investigations and material will be filed and classified, and their value estimated. New enterprises will be examined and the result recorded. All of this study will be made with the advice and cooperation of householders and with a full recognition that the subject is both difficult and delicate.

These bureaus of information will be the distributing points for the information gathered. Their function is primarily educational and will embrace several lines, of which the following are illustrative:

"1. Press department, from which will be issued a monthly bulletin ; material furnished to newspapers and periodicals; and statistics, papers, lecturers, and references to clubs and other organizations.

"2. Directories giving reliable employment agencies, advertising lists, day's work and daily service lists, approved boarding-houses for employees, training schools, social centers, organizations, etc., and all information of practical value to employers and employees.

"3. Co-operation with other lines of study; placing of college women in related lines of research and practical work; assistance to legislative and educational work."

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In brief, these bureaus will be clearing-houses where any person can find information and assistance along the lines indicated, and will be educational centres rather than a final aid or solution in themselves. It is hoped they may become centres which patrons will find of practical use.

The scope and order of the subjects to be investigated are not fully determined, but the following provisional outline will give some idea of the extent and nature of the study which the Committee hopes to complete. Any further suggestions will be welcomed:

*"I. Sources of Supply:* To include such as relative numbers, characteristics, influence, place and position of:

"1. Immigrants who go into American households, with special attention to the races furnishing general housework girls (which is a pressing problem), and to Japanese, Chinese, etc., as a possible partial solution.

"2. Americans, including city and country girls, negroes, etc.

"3. Effects of competition, restriction of immigration, etc.

*"II. Methods by which Employees and Positions are Obtained:* To include such as descriptions of places, methods, persons acting as intermediaries; reliability; abuses; frauds; improvements, etc.

"1. Private, free public, and philanthropic employment bureaus. (This study is completed and will be the first publication of this Committee.)

"2. Through employers and employees. (This includes references, with a view to obtaining some uniformity; means by which employers secure employees



directly from each other; ways in which employees influence each other, blacklist employers, etc.)

"3. Methods and value of advertising.

"III. *Conditions of Household Work*: To include private houses, hotels, restaurants, and boarding-houses, with as many grades and types of each as are possible.

"I. GENERAL: (a) Kind of dwelling, number in family, children, occupation of employer, etc.

"(b) Stipulations, demands, preferences of employees.

"2. HEALTH: (a) Housing, including size, heat, ventilation, furnishing of employees' rooms, with especial attention to changes affecting household workers.

"(b) Food, including kind, amount, custom of serving.

"(c) Bathing facilities, exercise, etc.

"(d) Effect of household work upon employees.

"(e) Advantages and disadvantages from a health standpoint.

"3. ECONOMIC: (a) Hours: busy, call, free time; comparisons.

"(b) Wages: amount, overtime, deductions, etc.

"(c) Work: kinds and methods, system, etc.

"(d) Competency: elements in determining standards.

"(e) Promotions, prizes, rewards for good service.

"(f) Advantages and disadvantages from an economic standpoint.

"4. SOCIAL: (a) Privileges, customs, rights.

"(b) Uniforms, use of first name, etc.

"(c) Opportunities, vacations, supervision, and restrictions of social life.

"(d) Advantages and disadvantages from a social standpoint.

"IV. *Attitudes and Opinions*: To include answers to specific questions in interviews, schedules, letters, and specific complaints and criticisms upon vital problems.

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"(1) Employers in large and small households, hotels, boarding-houses, etc.

"(2) Employees—foreign and American—in households and who have left for other fields of work.

"(3) Theorists and students who have studied, or are interested in the subject.

"V. *Status of Employers*: To include such as:

"1. Education, training in domestic science, business, etc.

"2. Standards for work, character, etc.

"3. Economic and social.

"VI. *Status of Employees*:

"1. Associates, standards of honesty, morality, temperance, religion.

"2. Education, domestic training, and attitude toward it.

"3. Protection in employer's home, comparisons, results.

"4. Independent life outside of employer's home—clothing, luxuries, organizations, recreations, social life, savings, housing of unemployed household workers.

"VII. *Legislation and Organizations*: (1) Existing laws affecting both employers and employees.

(2) Organizations which affect household interests.

"VIII. *Experiments*: Such as co-operative house-keeping and boarding; apartment hotels; profit-sharing in homes; daily service by employees, etc.

"IX. *Collection, Analysis, and Evaluation of Published Studies*.

"X. *Solutions*: (1) descriptions, methods, elements of failure in past and present.

"(2) Criticisms and suggestions; doubtful and possible remedies.

"XI. *Special Classes and Institutions Affecting the Household*:

"1. Nurse girls—qualifications, methods of selection, relation, and influence upon the child.

"2. Masseuses, hairdressers, manicures, etc.

"3. Private and public laundries—conditions, equipment, methods, etc.

"4. Public kitchens, prepared foods, etc.

"XII. *Literature*: Collections of the best books and edited references, reports, statistics, etc."

Whenever possible in each of the preceding, comparisons will be made with stores, factories, and offices, so that explanations may be found for the preference shown them.

A legitimate part of investigative work should be suggestions for and the encouragement of improvements. This study of offices shows a lack of thoroughness, system, and integrity, and the writer believes that model employment agencies working in connection with each other and with such a Bureau of Information as has just been outlined could do more than any other movement to remedy these and to improve both the quality and number of employees. This system of model agencies is outlined for the consideration of the reliable agencies already at work in the field and for any who may wish to start practical work in improving conditions. There are in each community enough reputable offices with good standards to unite and make such a system effective.

A successful agency, no matter how small, should be upon the department plan, including one each for application and registration, adjustment, daily service, co-operation, extension, complaints and

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investigation, and financial or business. In the application and registration department all the facts, references, etc., may be kept for both classes of patrons. The card system for permanent records, and day books and temporary card systems for daily use, seem best. Once these are filed and the data kept up on them, orders can be filled accurately without the patrons' frequenting the office. Such records should be interchanged among co-operating offices, and would force robbers, rounders, and stool pigeons into honest work, or into non-co-operative offices.

The second great difficulty which these investigations have revealed is not so much incompetency, but mal-adjustment—sending any one in the hope that she will suit. This is met by the second department—adjustment—with a specialist in charge. There should be small booths for private interviews, and the one in charge must study the employers and mingle with the employees. This work cannot be hurried, and the two thrown together haphazard, but tact, judgment, knowledge of human nature, and just as many facts as the registrar can give must be utilized. Exchanging should be a feature—that is, giving temporary aid and then sending the right person when found. This implies keeping the interest of the patrons constantly in mind. Waiting rooms must be adequate, provided with reading material when necessary, and a careful supervision maintained to eliminate the evils of gossip and undesirable applicants.

A third department contemplates a new line of work, which seems imperative if the supply and

the quality of employees are to be improved, or even maintained. We do not believe this will meet the whole problem, but will relieve conditions in homes which cannot grant the increasing demands of employees. The plan is to provide a number of household aides who may live together in a neighborhood lodging-house, or in any place accessible to their work. To these could be given routine work occupying as much of the day and evening as they wish to fill. Employers could afford to pay well for such service, as it relieves them of the expense of extra board and lodging and laundry. Regular schedules could be arranged for each aide according to the demands and location of families. If an employer wished all, or two thirds, or one half of the time, that arrangement could be made, the only conditions being that the girl has some choice in hours, in planning her schedule, and should not sleep at her employer's. Such an arrangement might be satisfactory to families living in flats and apartments where the presence of an aide not only crowds the family, but is often an intrusion into the family life. It also simplifies the problem of unsanitary and immoral conditions under which employees live in some homes. By this system many families could afford an aide where now the expense of an additional employee is too great. This plan gives the girl the economic and social freedom which will bring into household work many of the better class of girls. Indeed, as we have shown, some such system is absolutely necessary in order to attract store and factory employees, and is one way of dignifying household work. One illustration will show a pos-

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sible working of this scheme. A number of families live in a neighborhood, each having its own laundress. These could live in a lodging house and go to their employer's for the day, or the laundry could be done at the lodging-house. Their evenings, and when their work is done, would be free, and they could entertain or leave as soon as they wish for the evening, and thus live a much more normal, healthy life.

In this department would also be found reputable and skilled women for day's work, laundresses, cleaners, etc. Lists should be kept for the use of employers who prefer to engage them personally. Offices, as a rule, do not bother with temporary help, because they do not quite dare charge the regular fee, and a reduced rate does not pay. The average office does not have at heart so much the needs of the employer as the amount of income which it can control.

Any office will fail unless the supply of employees can be maintained. Here the best talent must be placed, and to this and the next department must fall the work of remedying the existing immoral conditions. No office meets the present-day need which will not undertake that. To secure employees means that there must be competent, trained, well-paid workers to go out into the labor market and compete daily and intelligently with offices which are securing the immigrant, and which are misleading girls from boarding-houses, etc. They must know personally every agency and institution which is laboring to save girls and wants work for them, and every organization and individual which has a

hold upon the supply. If a disreputable agency can afford to buy a newly arrived girl from a boarding-house for fifty cents or one dollar, and sell her into slavery, surely a reputable office can afford that to save her for some good home! If an office has nothing else to recommend it, this work of directing girls aright ought to make it worthy of support.

Such a department should also include some attempt to secure summer household or hotel work in healthful localities for girls in factories and other confining work during the year, and for students who work summers to earn tuition, and to help women from institutions into places where their work also means a new environment.

But if co-operation is the keynote to raise the standard and drive out the hopelessly disreputable office, it is also the keynote to maintain and assist every clean, honest office, and for this the use of a clearing-house is suggested. The bringing of employer and employee together is done in the adjustment department. But that is not enough. In offices at night will be found many hundreds of girls, who, after waiting all day, are without places; in others, there are many disappointed employers. Now, is there not some way by which these two classes can be brought together? It is not always a question of inequality of supply and demand, but simply of failure to meet at the necessary moment. During the day many offices could prevent patrons from going elsewhere, if, by a clearing-house system, they could guarantee that within half an hour help would be supplied. Now false promises and deceptions are employed to hold the patrons, the

only ground being the hope that "some one will drop in." Patrons go from one office to another hoping to "just happen" on what they want. Such offices as are here proposed, free as they must be from greed, could well work together and act as such clearing-houses, or establish one central clearing-house office for the benefit of all. There will be much opposition, for many offices will never reach the level of doing honest and conscientious work, just as there are many which do not even understand the situation; but surely some will see the personal advantage. These co-operating offices would place most of the employees, the central office acting as a mere central information bureau and record office for them all.

Because the intelligence office is a nucleus from which much important social and educational and industrial work can be done, it must have an interest in lodging-houses and training schools for its unemployed. Where advisable, those offices which run their own lodging-houses should be patronized by the others, and thus be able to assure employers of the places from which employees come. Where this is not possible, they should co-operate with existing houses or assist others to start them.

To make a daily service plan effective lodging-houses are needed in the districts where employees work. Approved boarding-houses could be used. Such a house would give the aides in their own houses all of the needed social requirements. A plan of this kind is the first step toward making the great mass of household workers less homeless and less likely to become household tramps.



Such a system of offices should encourage domestic training, but it scarcely seems to be its function to initiate it. There are at least three possibilities which it might develop. For thorough training a long course of from three to six months seems necessary. For this, it is suggested that scholarships be given in existing schools which meet the needs, rather than the equipment of expensive schools. In accordance with the co-operative tendencies which this plan emphasizes, these courses would have to meet special needs, and others added for the especial training of housekeepers, marketers, shoppers, etc. Such an institution as the Charity Organization Laundry, to which reference has been made, would make an admirable co-operative school, and no outlay would be needed at first. In urging training, the whole idea would be to utilize every available force, and to return assistance when needed, rather than to start competitive plants at much expense. The money needs to be spent on directing girls aright, not on training, when such fine facilities are waiting to be used.

A second important branch is the training of employees who already hold positions. By this plan, instructors would either go into houses and train employees in accordance with the wishes of the employer and the needs of the house, or the employees would come to the school for regular or special instruction. This would relieve the employer, who is often busy, incompetent, or indifferent. This plan works well in a small way in the Boston Y. W. C. A.

Third, arrangements can often be made with an employer who has more time than money, to take a

green girl for a small wage, with the understanding that she be placed after a certain time and another taken. If offices now find it so possible and profitable to use employers thus for their own sole profit, why cannot the home be made a legitimate training school and the employer profit by a reduction in wage? Green immigrant girls would agree to such an arrangement, if they were not led by offices to expect extravagant returns. One employer writes: "Many ladies would be willing to take untrained help for \$10 per month and give good conscientious training. I know at least two who are doing this now." If such co-operating offices advocated training or were in touch with competent schools, they would be using their influence in the right direction and their work would tell in increased efficiency and quality of the employees.

The writer believes any such system of offices would be incomplete without a complaint and inspection department. Broken contracts and complaints need to be investigated and the results recorded. In this way, an employer would not be blacklisted undeservedly, for now girls prevent each other from taking a place because they dislike her; and, on the other hand, most of the evils of written references would be obliterated and employees not discriminated against unjustly. All department records and services should be open to co-operating offices at all times.

Many complaints about offices are made. While it is not the business of one office to spy upon another, in justice to its patrons abuses should be looked into and reported to the proper authorities,

for the level of many can only be raised by constant surveillance. This department should co-operate with municipal authorities, and endeavor to supply reliable information about other places of business. Reputable offices can be of inestimable assistance, as they are natural places for complaint.

Every city possesses a sufficient nucleus of good offices so that if all of these departments could not be put into operation together, they could at least organize, adopt a standard devoid of the objectionable features and methods and insist upon that standard for membership. There could be co-operative and legislative committees to carry out other details, and they could gradually enable the smaller and poorer offices to carry out the department plan. New York has such an association formed to protect offices which could well extend its work to raising the standards. Such a system of offices doing clean, honest work, and improving other offices could not only be recommended by the proposed Bureaus of Information which constitute the first part of this movement, but should receive more direct encouragement and help as in matters of organization, advertising, and maintenance.

## CHAPTER VIII

### AGENCIES FOR MEN

Sources of information : Visits as investigators ; interviews with employers and employees ; advertising.

ALL of the agencies previously described provide employment for both men and women, or for women alone. But, in some, women are never seen, although they may be lodged in the same building or brought in on request. These are general agencies for contract laborers, farm hands, miners, lumbermen, brick-makers, railroad hands, cattle men, etc. ; shipping agencies for sailors and vessel employees ; padroni for unskilled Italian workmen ; trades-union agencies for skilled workmen ; and miscellaneous agencies for barbers and bartenders, besides the few run by Japanese, Chinese, and Greeks for their own countrymen.

General labor agencies are the most numerous and best patronized, and are frequented by large numbers of immigrants. The majority of applicants for work are shipped out of the city, and the service which these agencies render in relieving labor congestion is incalculable, and would be even greater if the dishonest ones were regulated and the honest ones better protected and encouraged. Many thousands of immigrants would be homeless and idle

and would become charity seekers were they not sent out to farms, mines, and other places where labor is needed.

A description of one such honest agency is typical of all. It occupies an entire building and has no saloon in connection with it. The first floor is used for offices, one department for employment, another for transportation, and the third for banking. There are a number of clerks employed, who speak the various necessary languages, and careful records are kept of every transaction. The agency preserves a copy of every labor contract and gives one to the employer. Transportation is sold without commission; and the banking business, which is essential when dealing with foreigners who have relatives abroad and few friends here, is conducted as an accommodation rather than for the small commission charged. Last year this agency sent abroad more than \$135,000 in savings, and not one complaint was filed. The fees charged are from \$2 to \$3, and are collected from the employer, no charge being made to the employee. The entire upper part of the building is a lodging-house, where men waiting for employment are lodged free of charge; and the rooms are kept clean and are not overcrowded. Men who are not waiting for employment, but have no other lodging-place, are charged twenty-five cents a night. When work is provided for immigrant men outside of the city, an office *attaché* must find their baggage and check it to the proper destination, secure transportation, escort the men to the station, and see that they are started right. For all of this service the employer pays. No liquor is permitted

on the premises, and no employee of the agency is allowed to accept gifts or fees from the men. Careful inquiries are made about employers, and men are sent out only in response to *bona-fide* orders. When the transportation is not paid by the employer in advance, the agent furnishes it, but only in cases where the employer is known, and care is taken in every way to prevent sending men where there is no prospect of work.

Most of these labor agencies, however, do not conform to this type and standard. In New York the greatest number are found in saloons or in saloon hotels. In Chicago, though the law prohibits this, they are run in saloons and gambling places, or in such close connection with them that conditions are similar to those in New York. In Boston and Philadelphia they are frequently over saloons, or so near them that the men find them convenient waiting-rooms. Fully two thirds of all agencies are located in or near saloons; and in New York this is true, almost without exception. Sometimes the agency is not at fault, since the saloon locates near it because of the prospect of patronage; in other instances the saloons induce agencies, by various promises, to locate over or near them. Where the agency is in the saloon, the same proprietor runs both. Fewer than one sixth are in living rooms, or cellars, and these are chiefly Italian, Greek, Slav, and Bohemian. In New York "Employment Furnished" is one of the signs used to attract custom to coffee houses, with their small gambling devices.

The average number of rooms used for office purposes is less than for intelligence offices, partly be-

cause the rooms are larger, as in saloons, and because men are quite willing to wait about outside. Fully one third are lodging-houses, and few recommend to other lodging-places. About one half have some office equipment and system, and the other half do business in any way that brings in fees. Equipment varies from table, chairs, and a record book, up to well-furnished rooms with desks, registers, files, telephone, chairs, etc. In saloons business is often transacted over the bar, and orders for drinks and for jobs seem to be indiscriminately mixed. Here tables and chairs constitute most of the furniture, and men drink and gamble while they wait. Where they are conducted in living rooms, there is little more equipment than in intelligence offices similarly located.

A few descriptions are typical of most of these. One, in the basement of a tenement, is a saloon and restaurant, where the men smoke, talk, eat, and drink. At night they are allowed to sleep on some rude benches. Another, which advertises "Employment for bakers and confectioners," is a bare room with a bar, one end being filled with tables and chairs where the men play cards and drink. Saloon hotels often have a combination office and saloon on the ground floor, and the second and third floors are used for lodgers. A trip through such a house showed men drinking and playing cards all over the premises, and in some places, where women were seen, the men told us they "hang about to get the men's money, and are favored and encouraged by the house." In one of these, where the saloon is in the basement, there are card and billiard tables at

which several young men were playing, and groups were hanging about the windows and at the bar. Another is in a dark, gloomy basement with a low ceiling, and filled with wooden benches. At night these benches are transformed into rude bunks. This place was filled with all kinds of indescribable baggage, and was dirty and disorderly beyond description. There is no eating-house, but employees bring in food, such as cold meat, "street bacon," fruit, etc. Because of the crowded condition, most of the "placing" is done on the street, and benches are placed along the sidewalk for the crowds who cannot get in. Another agency has a hair-dressing store in the basement below it, and consists of a large bare room, filled with wooden benches and chairs. Though women were waiting here the proprietor said he never did any business with women employers, and advised us not to get any help in the neighborhood. After a careful inspection of immigrant agencies, there is little reason to doubt that some of these saloon hotels are nothing more than disreputable houses, and that the employment agency is the means by which patrons are attracted.

Agencies not in connection with saloons have a much better tone and more system. They usually occupy from two to four rooms, and keep a registry, and the business is often transacted in a space set apart by a railing from the general waiting-room, or in a separate room. The walls are frequently covered with maps, and the rooms are clean and well supplied with chairs. Occasionally intoxicated employees are seen, and the office may be dirty, but



the crowd of idle men is orderly and more or less free from the sodden, disreputable "rounder" element found in saloon agencies.

The business of general labor agencies frequently includes foreign banking and the sale of transportation. These also are usually over or next to saloons, but have more equipment and system. They do not confine the foreign banking to employees placed by them, but remit money for all classes of immigrants at a good commission. Transportation is often furnished at a profit, and heavy charges are made for carrying and storing baggage. These profits, together with the fees for lodging and changing money, make the unemployed, especially the immigrants, so desirable a prey that expensive systems are maintained to lure them to the agencies, such as hiring men to frequent parks and other lounging-places, where they present various inducements.

The character of many of these agencies is unmistakable. From the list of licensed places, it did not appear if they were for men or women, and at all of them "servants" were asked for, to be sure women were not kept, before men investigators were sent to the place. The treatment accorded us as employers was seldom civil, and we were regarded with extreme suspicion. Some, especially for farmers, kept both men and women, though the latter were rarely in and about the saloons, but runners were sent up through the hotel or out to surrounding lodging-houses "to rout them out." At one place a farmer, waiting on the sidewalk asked us: "You married? if you be you 'd better send yer husband

for help; for the men and women waiting for jobs at this office are not fit companions for a lone woman, and the women only come here to drink." In another saloon hotel, where men and women were waiting and talking together in the back part, one woman was complaining in German over her fee, and, still grumbling, she and the proprietor disappeared up-stairs. In such agencies they usually told us, with suspicious glances, that they had no help to suit us. A German man and woman, whom we met outside, said that they had just landed and had been recommended to go there by a man whom they met on the boat from Ellis Island to the city. They said two girls in their party had gone with men that evening to the country, but they did not know where. The man said, "The place seems no good to me; they advertise in country places, and strange men come and pick the women out like cattle and take them away." Both had bundles and had been engaged to go to the country. Outside of another saloon hotel a waiting employee suggested, "You'd better get out of this neighborhood before dark"; and at another, where women seemed plentiful, we asked for help, and were told to go to the "mission houses." When we replied that we had seen several women, they said, "Oh, they are only after the men's money." In another, where we asked for rates for a friend to Germany, the proprietor was impertinent and said he furnished rates, but chiefly, to California. When asked why the sign on his window said he sold steamer tickets, he replied, "Well, I have a right to advertise what I like, and my office is not for employment, but for labor

contracts." He refused all further information. In Chicago few saloon agencies supply women, and they are seldom found about them. In Boston, the appearance of women creates a commotion, and few are found in the Philadelphia agencies.

The following information concerning business methods is indisputable, since it was gained by men through visits to the agencies, through talks with waiting employees, and tips from them, and from numerous records of prosecution. It is misleading to say that all of these agencies resort to the methods outlined, but the business is not and cannot be limited to honest men so long as any person who can pay a license fee can engage in it. And so long have these conditions been ignored that the whole business has little standing in the eyes of business people, and many reputable agents either just make a living, or are driven to less honest methods through the effective and unscrupulous competition of their associates.

Agencies have many sources of revenue. Where lodging is not free, the charge varies from twenty cents upward a night, and the scheme in some cases is to keep a man out of employment until he has no more money for board. One investigator reported: "This place is a lodging-house and the office is run for the lodgers' benefit. I am sure the boarding end of the business is simply another way to get money and not have to give it back, as the law requires, if the man fails to get employment." A woman living next door said, "No one ever seems to get a job there." It is customary for employers to advance transportation, to be deducted later from

the wages, and the agency then rarely has a profit, but where the man pays for his own, or the agent advances it, he can charge a higher rate. Some agents refuse to allow the employees' baggage to be moved except by their own expressman, and this is a source of profit, as is also the storage of baggage. A commission is charged for sending money to the immigrant's home, and for changing money. One agent charged \$5.02 for exchanging \$105.02, and gave the man a worthless \$100 bill. The money was recovered upon complaint to the city bureau. The chief income is from fees. In the more honest offices such employers as farmers pay \$1 to \$3 for each employee and the latter is charged nothing, although the farmer later may deduct \$1 from his wages. Contractors and employers of large numbers of men frequently pay \$1 to \$2 each, while others get the entire fee from the employee. Fees for employers rarely exceed \$3, and are quite uniform; but for the employee they are oftentimes limited only by what he can pay, and that may be \$1 or \$20. Instances are recorded where men have paid \$5, \$10, \$15, for positions paying from \$1 to \$2 a day, with no assurance of their permanency.

There are many misunderstood contracts, and many hardships to employees for which agencies cannot be held responsible. They are at best but a medium of exchange, and cannot vouch for the competency and reliability of employees or the honesty of employers. They are imposed upon by both. Worthless, unreliable men ask for positions and cause dissatisfaction when placed; orders come in from apparently reliable employers, and when the

men arrive they find they have been hired as strike breakers. Hours, wages, and work are misrepresented to the agent, and he in turn misrepresents them to the men. In many instances agents trust employers for fees and transportation, and are never paid. There is a desire on the part of employees to "do the agency" whenever possible, and much bad faith is due to the desire of each to get ahead of the other. But, granting all of this, agents, even when thoroughly honest, work much hardship through sheer carelessness and indifference in the pressure of business, and there are methods and schemes and frauds which are deliberate; indeed, they are so intentional that they are the policy, and, in some instances, the sole business method of certain agencies. Only a few of the many can be outlined here.

To attract men, some advertise on their cards "Positions furnished free." Then, upon various pretexts, they charge from \$2 to \$5. Once in an agency it is difficult to get out without paying something, so alluring are the promises. One style is known as a "dollar office." The manager has desk room in other offices or occupies bare rooms. He advertises for men or drums up trade through agents. Every applicant is charged a dollar before any offer is made, though catch-words are thrown out about "good business," "orders," etc., and when the dollar is secured nothing further is done. The agent does not care for an additional fee, but lives on these dollars, and makes no effort whatever to get employment. The man gets "tired of waiting"; or "sick of daily promises" that "there will

be something to-morrow." In one a man came in, paid his fee, and was told to "call next day." After he had gone out the proprietor said: "There goes another d—— fool, he has thrown his money away; well, we must make ice while the weather is cold; when it gets warm these suckers will look out for their own jobs." He boldly admitted that he made no attempt to get jobs, except by clipping newspaper advertisements. His contracts read, that "he [the employee] shall in no way hold the managers responsible for failure of service," and he advertises: "We are the helping hand of the public, and the all-seeing eye of your interests."

The transient agency is ordinarily simply an address at which mail is received. Attractive and unusual advertisements are inserted, and for further information applicants must send varying small sums. These agencies change addresses frequently to avoid detection by the postal authorities. This kind of business is usually lucrative, for the men are shrewd and clever advertisers. Typical transient offices spring up during periods of great demand for labor. For instance, they advertise for help for the St. Louis Exposition, and furnish employees with addresses, who, after paying their fare, find, when they arrive, that they are stranded, and that the city is crowded with similar disappointed people. In New York, after such an agency had in an incredibly short time collected about one thousand fees, it was notified it must give a bond, and in the night it quietly decamped for some other city. These have no *bona-fide* orders from Exposition authorities, but rely upon the general demand and the "good luck"

of the individual who pays for the job. Another such agency relies upon strikes. It opened an office in New York City recently, and advertised for two hundred men for permanent work in Connecticut, in the place of strikers on a street railway. Conspicuously lying about the office were newspaper accounts of the strike. The men reported, and paid fees, and on the specified morning about 150, with their bags, gathered there to receive the promised transportation. They were told, "The manager has received a telegram and gone to Philadelphia unexpectedly." His clerk had also disappeared.

Saloon agencies claim that they do not charge fees, but as a rule employees contradict this. The methods are really simple. They advertise daily in newspapers and on posters as follows:

"Wanted—Farm hands.—1000 laborers for railroad work in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois; free fare. Men for Denver, Colo., Wyoming, Kansas City, Minneapolis, and Omaha; cheap fares. Austrians, Greeks, and Italians for Indian Territory and Arkansas. 500 men for woods in Wisconsin; cheap fare. Molders and laborers for factory. Frame window makers, and help for all kinds of positions."

"Wanted—500 Laborers for Railroad work in Missouri and Indiana; free fares. Marble cutters and carvers; no union. Porter who can speak German. We have positions for all classes of help."

"Wanted—500 Railroad laborers, company and contract work; free fare; low rates to New Orleans and points South. Farm hands \$25 to \$30 per mo. and board. Good homes for winter, also other jobs near city."

In addition to these advertisements, their cards read: "Wanted—500 laborers every day, highest wages, free fare, daily shipment"; and these are widely distributed throughout the year, regardless of demand or season.

Several hundred men respond to these, and after paying a fee, usually \$1, they are told by the agent that the transportation will come any time, that they will be sent out before evening, and that they must hang around within call; and of course the saloon is most convenient. They are naturally feeling good at the prospect of a job and spend money freely for drinks. By evening the transportation has not arrived, plausible excuses are given, and they are told to come the next day. This is kept up until the protest becomes vigorous, and then the dollar fee may or may not be returned; but in the meantime the saloon has taken in over its bar from \$1 to \$5 from each one. Proprietors admit that from two hundred to seven hundred men weekly are drawn there, solely by promises of work. Even if such an agency fills some positions, men are kept waiting with the temptation to drink before them. One employee said, "Jobs seem to depend on how much we drink; if we are good drinkers we get in with the proprietor and he favors us if a job comes in, and the other fellows stand no show."

Daily advertisements in newspapers, offering places to a number of men varying from one hundred up to one thousand, are usually prospective and do not represent orders waiting to be filled, and to this degree are fraudulent and misleading. Sometimes when an agency has filled a *bona-fide* order for



two hundred men, it does not scruple to keep the advertisement running, or to send other men to the same places during the rest of the week. When large manufacturers and contractors complain that these extra men are sent, the agency simply replies, "We give them a rest and try others." In some cases, men are sent to firms from whom orders have been received years ago; and to others, because the agent has seen some newspaper account of a dearth of labor. Occasionally employers lend themselves to these frauds, and for a small commission are quite willing to tell applicants, "The position has just been filled," when no vacancies existed. It thus appears to the employee that the agency is honest and that he is too late; and the agency then has an excuse to retain the fee. In this way men are induced to become vagrants, for often they must tramp or steal rides to get back. One of the speakers before a labor congress, in commenting on this condition, said:

"Another feature of modern industrialism which is proving a potent force in the disintegration of families, is the employment agency. It is the auction-block of the wage-system. While New York City is threatened with bread-riots, while in Buffalo and every industrial centre in the State of New York factories are closed or running five hours per day, five days per week, ——— Agency has a flaming sign—'4,000 men wanted in New York State to work on railroads; good wages; free transportation.' These men pay the employment office one dollar each. The railroads transport the 4000, its officials knowing at the time they want only 350. But the presence of the 4000 will make it easy to make their own

terms with the 350 they want. The employment office has made \$4000, and the railroad corporation has an overcrowded labor market as a menace to the refractory. The remainder of these men are a thousand miles from the homes they left buoyant with the hope of soon earning some money to send to the wife and babies. Out of work, away from home, they degenerate morally and physically until, in Chicago, there is another batch of deserted wives, in New York, another set of tramps. These victims are men who are out of work and want it. Such agencies make most when times are hardest and their victims can least afford to be fleeced. The farther they can ship their victims, the better they like it; and, as the Iowa and Missouri Bureaus of Labor Statistics have shown, the corporations of the West would rather give free transportation to five hundred men from a distance than to employ the one hundred men they need directly from the neighborhood of the work to be done. The farther they can get a man from home, the better terms they can make with him."

This is further verified by the fact that an advertisement in a Kansas City paper will ask for five hundred men for St. Louis, while a St. Louis paper of the same date will advertise for a thousand wanted in Kansas City.

The character of work and of wages is often misrepresented. In one case five men were sent to work in a smelter, and the contract called for employment at from \$2.40 to \$3 per day, and the return of the \$12 fare if they remained thirty days. They were put to work as common laborers at \$1 to \$2 a day, ten hours' work; and when they demanded the terms of the contract they were discharged, and of course

lost their fare, which was part of the scheme. Another employee, with his countrymen, answered an advertisement in a German paper calling for men to go to Florida, to work in oyster canning factories. In giving his experience he said:

"We started South in an emigrant car. In two days we were put off the car in a town in Mississippi. We were ordered into wagons and driven to an oyster cannery. There we were put to work 'shucking' oysters at one cent a pound. The best we could make was fifty cents per day. We were shown a row of shanties, where we were told we could live, but that we would only have one room to eight persons. We had been promised furnished houses. After enduring this for four days we threatened to go to the local authorities, and finally were sent back North."

When the agent who sent these men was arrested, there were found in his office twenty other homeless victims who had paid money for positions in Mexican mines and were waiting to be shipped.

In another instance, there were such frequent changes of men under some railway section foremen that the officials investigated and found that the foremen were in collusion with the agency, and that they accepted men with the understanding that at the end of two weeks or a month they would be discharged and new ones taken. The foremen received forty per cent. of the fees for their part in this business. In other cases contractors in league with agencies will not hire men directly, but send them to the agency, where they must first pay their fees. Sometimes the men give the agency an order on

their employer for \$5, and the contractor sees that it is paid. Other contractors, not in league with agencies, have rake-offs, which they take as compensation for giving jobs to the men. This rake-off system, through the agency and independently, is one of the most serious problems of unskilled labor.

But the schemes are not all to defraud the employee, and some are so unscrupulous that they rob left and right. Occasionally they ask large industries to order men from them, especially when they employ a nationality in which the agency deals, as Swedes. When the company refuses, they not only threaten, but have deliberately sent people out to cause dissatisfaction and induce the men to leave. In one case, an application was made for an injunction to prevent employment agents from carrying on this work. Another made considerable money last year by advertising for partners. Several men were trapped and induced to put in small sums at various times during the year and then were forced out by misrepresentation of the amount of the proceeds, or the methods were such that others were glad to withdraw, without insisting upon a return from their investment.

One practice seems to be peculiar to agencies which supply lumbermen. When the demand exceeds the supply, representatives from the camps come down, and with the aid of the agency men are made drunk and then sent up to the camps in box cars. When they wake up sober they are at the camp, penniless, and quite willing to work awhile. Lumber camps are often imposed upon, too; for when they order and pay for experienced

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have secured positions, which they do not risk by leaving to prosecute an agency for return of a small fee. An agency which sends out on false promises to places several miles stands little chance of a prosecution.

An agency which falls somewhere between the real labor office and the shipping agencies for men is that for shipping cattle helpers, etc. It advertises somewhat as follows for men to help on the ships: "Attention—Best opportunity to work on fast steamers to London, Liverpool, Liverpool; no steamship work." In addition, they get "pullers-in" whom they pay \$1 for every man they bring in from the parks or wherever they find men. The work on these vessels is misrepresented as easy, and ignorant foreigners are induced to pay fees ranging from \$5 to \$25 for "passage money" to their homes in Europe. All sorts of misrepresentations are made to them about the nature of the voyage, the possibilities of returning to the United States when they wish, and about railroad tickets to their homes when they arrive at European ports. Emphasis is placed upon the passage rather than on the labor.

Upon the prosecution of some agencies in New York City, the following facts were brought out: that passage fees range from \$5 to \$25; that misled men are oftentimes stranded without means of return; that they are told the work is light and instead find the hours long, the food only what the regular men get; that they are often inhumanely crowded in undesirable places to sleep; that

some agencies refuse to let the men carry their baggage to the steamers, but make them bring it to the agency and charge from twenty-five cents to \$1 for taking it down; and that they coach the men to pass the examinations set by the Department of Animal Industry for all cattle tenders, in regard to age, physical ability, etc. But places are not always given for fees, and there are many complaints. Two men in New York paid \$25 each, \$20 for a ticket and \$5 for a fee, and were given a letter to an agent in New Orleans who was to ship them to South Africa. The agent there claimed he knew nothing of the New York firm, but had several complaints against it. These men were forced to sell their clothing in order to get back to New York. This stranding of sailors in Southern seaport towns is a favorite practice. Another employee was sent to Boston. When he presented the card given him, he was told the office had no connection with a New York agent. In a cheap lodging-house that night he was robbed of \$10. After visiting another employment agency, he got a job in a lumber camp, met with an accident which sent him to the hospital for three weeks, and then pawned his watch to get back to New York. This was one train of events for which an agency received \$5.

There are in all seaport and large lake towns shipping agencies, which are for the purpose of supplying all vessel employees. Very little is known of these, for by adroit methods they avoid being licensed and conduct their business in connection with sailors' boarding-houses and saloons. The New York law has hitherto not affected them, be-

cause they claim they receive no fees, and the only law which reaches them is a United States statute which reads:

“If any person shall demand or receive directly or indirectly from any seaman or other person seeking employment as seaman, or from any person on his behalf any remuneration whatever, for providing him with employment, he shall be liable to a penalty of not more than \$100.”

This law is ineffective as it now stands, for prosecutions are by civil action, and the process of the courts is so slow that ordinarily a sailor is out of port long before the case can be heard. There is an amendment before Congress to change violations to a misdemeanor, thereby bringing it before the criminal courts. The Federal law also prohibits retaining of clothes by boarding-houses, and collection of money for indebtedness to saloons.

These shipping agencies are usually located in or above saloons, and while some have presentable offices, many are even worse than general labor offices. One was found in a dirty three-story shanty, the ceilings little more than six feet high. In another, the only equipment in an outer room was two long benches nailed to the wooden partition, and in an inner office a long table, a desk, and some chairs. In a third the windows and chairs were broken, and the whole appearance was that of a storage room. In one building the saloon was on the first floor, and the proprietor rented the attic to sailors for \$1.50 a week to sleep in as best they could.

The men who run these agencies are known as



shipping masters, and usually devote themselves to a particular line of work. One will supply trans-Atlantic steamships, another, deep-water sailing vessels, and another, coasting schooners. The usual fee charged is \$2, which is paid by the boarding-house keeper, who gets a lien on the sailors' pay. For this fee and any board due, the sailor gives his note, and these amounts are deducted from his wages and paid by his employer. The relation between the agent, the boarding-house keeper, the saloon-keeper, and the runner for the boarding-house is very close. When a seaman finishes a trip the runner is waiting for him, takes him to a good saloon to spend his money, and then to the boarding-house. When he gets sufficiently in debt to the boarding-house keeper, that worthy gets him a berth and ships him out. The sailor is thus at the mercy of the agency, saloon, and boarding-house. Most of these boarding-houses do not even compare with what rank as decent places, and some of them are in league with immoral houses, which share profits with them. One shipping agent said he furnished "girls as well as crews to sailing vessels only." These boarding-houses ask \$7 per week, and never charge for less than one week, even when the sailor is at the house less than one day. In New York they are licensed and inspected, but the law is so worded that these houses have a monopoly and decent unlicensed places cannot compete with them. Sailors are practically forced into them, and so powerful are the houses and agencies that sailors know they cannot get jobs, and sailing masters know they cannot get crews, without them.

A Federal law which helps the whole system is that seamen cannot get an advance on wages unless they are in debt; then they may make allotments to their creditors. If a sailor wishes to leave money with his wife and child before sailing, his recourse is to get in debt to the boarding-house keeper, and give him an assignment to cover this indebtedness and the amount for his family, which the keeper pays to them. It is to the boarding-house keeper's advantage to get him into debt, and he knows that pay is always forthcoming. Because of this system of shipping crews, and the alliance with saloons, American ports have a bad reputation, as the masters say they never know what kind of crew they will have or how much premium they must pay boarding-house keepers.

The evidence that these agencies do collect fees from sailors is most conclusive. Our investigators have been told the fee charged them would be \$2 for furnishing licensed engineers. One affidavit shows that the sailor agreed that \$1 should be deducted from his wages, and a receipt was given him stating this agreement. Another, who had signed no advance note, who had not stayed at a sailor's boarding-house, and was not in debt, had £4 deducted when he reached Liverpool as a fee for shipping him. His voyage was for three months at £6 a month, so almost one fourth was deducted. It is so difficult to prove that fees are charged that the following copies of affidavits are appended, selected from the many :

"I am a seaman, and on —— I was engaged as a fireman to work on board the S. S. —— at \$25 a month

by a shipping master named ———, who lives at No. ———. At the time he engaged me he demanded two (\$2) dollars as a shipping fee and I went aboard said vessel and made the voyage to ——— and returned to ——— and was discharged from the ship on April ———, and the two (\$2) dollars shipping fee was deducted from my wages by a man in the ——— Consul's office. I was refused payment of my wages until the \$2 was agreed by me to be deducted. I am acquainted with ———, and to my knowledge he was a seaman on board the S. S. ——— and on the same voyage, and there was demanded of him a shipping fee of \$2 in the ——— Consulate."

"I went to the boarding-house of ———, in ——— Street. When I had been in the house five or six days, ——— got me, through ———, shipping agents, a job as fireman on the S. S. ———. When I began work on the vessel, I left the house. I was engaged for a period of ——— days. When I finished, a note was given me by the engineer for my pay and this I took to the shipping office of ———. I there signed the note, and gave it to Mr. ———, who placed it on file. ——— then gave me \$2, saying that he had no more change and would give me the rest at the house. He never afterwards gave me a cent. According to ——— reckoning, there was due me, at the rate of £4 5 s. a month, for which I work, the sum of \$15.82. ——— therefore withheld from me \$13.82. At that time I was only indebted to him five or six dollars for five or six days' board. On Sunday, Nov. ———, I made a demand on ——— for my clothes which were in his house. He refused to give them to me."

A boarding-house keeper's testimony shows the

**fee system between shipping masters and boarding-houses:**

"I brought six men to the S. S. ———, bound for the ———, who signed on board and who made the voyage which was completed ———. It was agreed by ———, shipping masters for the said vessel, that \$45 should be paid to ———, for the said six men, to be deducted from the wages of the said six men, and \$32.50 was paid and \$12.50 was retained by ——— as a shipping fee, and the said ——— refused to pay said \$12.50 to the said ———. This payment was made before the said voyage was begun."

Because of the reckless, often improvident nature of many sailors, boarding-house keepers need some protection, and \$2 is not a high fee for an agency. But every such agency should be licensed, inspected, and regulated, and the collusion between agencies, lodging-house keepers, and saloons made less profitable. In view of the evidence, this seems a not impossible task.

In some cities, free shipping agencies and sailors' homes have been started to meet some of the evils, and the need of the extension of these seems imperative, for the sailor is more dependent than others, since he resorts less to advertising, depends but little on his fellows, and two thirds of the time is in debt to the boarding-house which places him.

The Italian labor agencies present different methods and problems, although the frauds are not unlike those in others. The few places run openly as employment agencies are found in living rooms of

tenements, in basements, and dark coal-cellar, and are usually headquarters for clubs and social purposes. A few others are found in barber shops, and some saloons are used as meeting-places for the agent and employees. With the Italians, much of the work is done on the streets and in other business places. The Italian agent is the *padrone*, and his power over Italian workmen is absolute for many reasons. The *padrone* or *bosso* typifies conditions in the smaller centres of Southern Italy transplanted to this country, and only slightly modified by the new surroundings. The Southern Italian peasant has been brought up for generations past under a bureaucratic system, and being apparently ignorant, though really intelligent, he instinctively relies on some one else for leadership and advice. He thinks an intermediary is always necessary in anything that is outside his routine of life. In Italy this intermediary may be the local priest, the *Syndic* of his henchmen, the local professor, or some one supposed to have special powers, ability, or pull. In this country that spirit of dependency for leadership is intensified by ignorance of the language. The peasant laborer, brought up with a strong sense of *campanilismo* for the village whence he came, turns to the compatriot here from the same or near-by village whence he himself comes. If such compatriot knows his business, he has the elements for a successful *padrone*. He sets up a bank or a notary's office or a store, and there his fellow-villagers congregate. It is their club-room as well as the centre of social and business life.

When the laborer is out of work he goes there to

lounge; when he goes to work out of town that remains his headquarters. He puts his money there; through it, he sends money to Italy; letters for him must be addressed there, and the banker will write for him what letters he wants. If the *padrone* is honest he can do much good, even though he makes money at the business. But his powers for evil, if he is not honest, are unlimited. The Italian may be shrewd enough not to trust him entirely, but he will trust him more than any one else in the new country. As a natural consequence of what might be called this friendship the laborer turns to the banker or *padrone* for advice as to work, and he will go where the *padrone* sends him. He does not require any cast-iron agreement, or indeed any formality of agreement, in accepting a job, for two reasons: First, contracts are not necessary between friends; second, the laborer knows that if the *padrone* cheats him he can get satisfaction afterwards by an appeal to the *padrone's* constituents, for there is a strong spirit of defensive solidarity among the men, which is the most efficient check to too flagrant a disregard of rights by the *padrone*.

American contractors were quick to see that such *padrone* could furnish a constant supply of laborers under the *padrone's* personal control. The men looked to the *padrone*, not to the contractors, which meant so much less trouble for the latter. So they delegated certain powers to the *padrone*. They said to them, in practice, "Your men are good workers, but we can't handle them—we don't know their ways; as long as they do the work you can

manage them as you please: we 'll let you feed them, house them, and pay them." Thus the padrone's power was strengthened from the side of the employer as well as of the employee. Now, it must be obvious that on the "job" outside the city, the laborer's shanty becomes the club-room as the bank was. The same system goes on in every particular.

This system explains also what many Americans think are cases of imported laborers from Italy. The padrone or banker, growing in importance, being the go-between between the laborer here and his family and relatives in Italy, becomes known on the other side. Perhaps he sends a contribution to the local church of his native village, or perhaps he founds one of the numberless Italian societies here bearing the name of his village. He then becomes known as its president on the other side. Things look bright at a distance and attractive. Michele hears that Giuseppe is now president of a society and a banker,—great land, that America!—and he comes and swells the list in the padrone's following.

Such a system for obtaining employment is bad for the men because it tends to destroy independence, individuality, and initiative. It is bad for Americans because it keeps the men away from American influences, but at present the system seems to be a necessity. The evils inherent in such a system where these bankers are unreliable and unscrupulous are three: The sources of supply, the abuses of the commissaries, and the failure to forbid brutal acts by bosses. When the supply is limited such

agencies send tailors, barbers, waiters, and other men utterly unfit for such work, out to contractors to work in mines or on the streets, misrepresenting the work. But even then the commissions are not enough, and they resort to other methods.

Second. There is a good profit in running a camp-store or commissary even on a legitimate basis, but it is a work of detail with which contractors dislike to bother. So they let out this privilege to such agencies, the consideration being that they furnish the men necessary for a given job, and, in certain cases, guarantee the cost of transportation. Although the men are allowed to "buy anywhere," there is generally no other place to buy except the camp-store. The contractors honor the storekeeper's statements, but will entertain no appeal from the decision of the storekeeper regarding store complaints, so if a charge is extortionate, as it often is, the laborer is helpless, as what he owes the storekeeper is deducted rightly or wrongly by the contractor from his wages. Another evil is that the storekeeper makes use of the so-called "boarding-house laws," and arrests men who may be dissatisfied and wish to leave. In this way they are kept at work.

Third. While agencies are not directly guilty of the brutality of bosses, yet they send Italian laborers into camps where they know it exists. Transportation is sometimes advanced by the contractors, and if the men leave this is a clear loss, so many methods are used to keep them. From a careful investigation by Mr. Gino C. Speranza, it appears that some of these abuses include employing armed guards,



and from the wages of the men is deducted the pay of these guards. One affidavit shows that

“a laborer at one of these camps had been knocked down and was being beaten by a boss with a heavy stick, and cried out to his countrymen for the sake of their common blood to save him. Thereupon two ran to his assistance with their picks, but were followed by their own boss who stopped them at the point of a revolver. But even then, while they could not help him, they shouted to the abused one not to resist or he would surely be killed. It appears further that the man who had been knocked down was forced to stand up and be pushed along by the boss, and whenever he fell he struck him blows with a long stick.”

The extreme disregard of law and the indifference of authorities is furnished by a case where

“six Italians, who left camp because of bad treatment, while in the custody of law on a warrant for alleged non-payment of board, were bound with ropes by a contractor who entered the grand jury room in the county court house and led them into the public street, where, in the presence of the ‘whole town’ and of several officials, he hitched them to a mule and would have pulled them back to camp in that manner, had not a justice of peace interfered.”

These are briefly some of the evils for which some bankers are directly responsible, for in most instances they know the conditions of these camps, and send ignorant men into them upon false pretexts and promises.

Of this system and its possible improvement, Mr. Gino C. Speranza says:

"The business of a padrone, even on a legitimate basis, is a profitable investment. The commissary privilege let out by contractors to the padrone is very valuable. There is no reason why contractors should sell such valuable privileges to cheap padroni. By cheap padroni, I mean men who care for nothing except to make an exorbitant profit. Contractors should understand that the padrone can make a good profit and still not bring the men into servitude. They ought to take an interest in this as a business proposition—for the laborer who feels himself fairly treated is a better worker than one who thinks himself aggrieved. What appears as a humanitarian motive has its business side. The Society for the Protection of Italian Immigrants is practically demonstrating it. It has undertaken the work of an office itself to contractors as a padrone. Employers of Italian labor looked doubtfully upon such offers; they feared it was too philanthropic and not businesslike enough. The same belief was entertained regarding Mills hotels as practical paying concerns. How could they compete with lodging-house rates and give infinitely better accommodation for the same price? They did, and they are proving good investments. The trouble was that the lodging-houses were making too excessive a profit. So with the Society for the Protection of Italian Immigrants. It has demonstrated that there can be a practical, businesslike padrone system at a fair profit, even by treating the laborers with consideration. We can give them healthier quarters, equally good food at cheaper rates, and see that they get fair play, better than any other padrone, and still make the business self-supporting. What is more, we try to bring the laborer and

the contractor more in touch, to the benefit of both through better mutual understanding. We send an experienced Italo-American with them to act as a sort of friend, if questions arise. That friend is the type of foreman that eventually will supplant the Irish foreman on jobs where Italians are employed. The Irish foreman on Italian jobs is an anomaly."

The dangers which beset the unemployed, unskilled laborer at employment agencies would, we believe, exist more extensively for skilled workers if trades unions did not prevent them. Their system is efficient because it is co-operative. At the headquarters of local unions men wait or leave their addresses and are notified when work comes in. The Pattern Makers send telegrams to registered unemployed men when a job comes in. The business agents get work for men, and many employers send directly to them. There is, of course, no charge. Unions are active because to them it means an opportunity for pushing themselves or putting a man in a new place where they have little hold. The incentive is not money but power. The trades journals give information of places where men are wanted, and some unions, like the American Society of Engineers, and the Granite Cutters, have a plan whereby each local union notifies the national headquarters of unemployed members and the number of positions which it is able to fill, and telegrams are used to inform men of vacancies. This is the nearest approach in this country to the system of the German free agencies.

So far as a medium of exchange can do so, trades

unions solve the problem for certain classes of skilled workers among men. There is but one general criticism of them,—and some of the secretaries admit the evil, and have taken steps to eliminate it,—that union headquarters are so often in or about saloons and men must wait about them. One reason is that liquor dealers recognize the advantage and offer places at lower rates. Wherever settlements or individuals have been able to offer desirable rooms, unions have expressed themselves as more than willing to meet there, so the saloon is not essential to the success of trades-union meetings and labor agencies. Another condition to which the attention of unions is called is the method of hiring waiters and miscellaneous male help for hotels. The head waiter often makes his headquarters in a saloon, from which he frequently receives a fee, and here the men come to meet him, are employed, and spend money freely for drinks, and, as usual, the men spending the most money in this way are employed.

The attitude of trades unions toward private agencies is not one of great friendliness, and in some instances they have attacked them,—not so much because of fraudulent and immoral conditions, but because many are active during strikes and furnish strike breakers, and because they handle many foreigners whom the unions cannot or do not care to unionize.

These groups include most of the agencies run for men, although there are a few special ones. In some saloons are found agencies for bartenders, and in a number of barber shops are found those for barbers.

These are usually licensed. They accept fees only when positions are offered, but even then abuses are so serious that, at a Federation of Labor meeting, resolutions were introduced condemning their methods, and these were endorsed by the Bartenders' International League. In a few instances these agencies furnish barmaids and female barbers.

New York City has one Chinese employment agency, run for men. It is located in a printing office where a Chinese weekly is published. It furnishes individual Chinese workers for households and elsewhere, and sends them out in large numbers to fill contracts. The fees depend upon the risk and the places to which they are sent. The English used by the manager was so defective and the Chinese of the interpreter was so unintelligible that much could not be learned beyond this.

New York has also a Japanese agency, which is located in a business house and is well equipped as an office. Employers are charged \$3, and employees different amounts depending upon the position and the fees they can afford. Women nurses and companions are supplied, and men for household and other work are furnished.

There are also some agencies which supply Greeks. These are often located in undesirable places, over or near saloons, and supply other nationalities, both men and women. They claim that they obtain employees, through Greek pastors, from Ellis Island and furnish large numbers of men to contractors.

The remedies for the abuses in men's agencies lie along four lines: adequate legislation, which will provide for constant and careful inspection, and an

accessible bureau of complaint; an association of the reputable agencies, which will insist upon certain standards and methods in the business; extension of trades-union agencies to the unskilled workers, and the establishment of employers' agencies. These last are being introduced in various parts of the country and are of two kinds. In one the employers start it as a business venture, so they can secure men when wanted. They put in a competent manager, adopt good business methods, and conduct the agency for the advantage of both employer and employee. The other is a more co-operative plan, each employer becoming a subscriber and paying so much a year, and receiving employees when wanted. It is not philanthropic, and offers no training, but is simply a well-conducted agency. It has the personal interest of employers, and since there is usually a surplus of employees this is a great advantage. The Employers' Association of Chicago has recently organized a free bureau for the purpose of supplying manufacturers and others. Each applicant is required to give a reference, and it proposes to keep track of "union men who violate the law and slug." About seventy-five per cent. of the men who have applied are not union men, so this represents a new independent movement on the part of employers. Similar bureaus are to be established in other cities and States, and an interchange of business arranged. The municipal free agency, described in connection with free employment agencies, is well worthy of consideration as a means of improving conditions for unemployed men.

## CHAPTER IX

### PROFESSIONAL, COMMERCIAL, AND MISCELLANEOUS AGENCIES

Sources of information : Visits to agencies of all classes ; answers to circulars sent to patrons of agencies ; interviews with managers of agencies and registered employees ; statements of models, actors, business men, and others.

THERE is a group of agencies, not very large, but important, which is used by another class of the unemployed. This includes teachers' and theatrical agencies, and those for models, and for trained nurses, which may be called professional agencies.

Of this group, teachers' agencies are undoubtedly the most important. There is a difference of opinion as to whether they are really employment agencies, as that term is commonly understood, and most of them succeed in escaping license fees and regulation, upon the claim that they are not "common employment offices." This is due to their aversion to association with other agencies, rather than to any basis of fact, for they have all of the characteristics of employment agencies as to purpose, methods, and organization, as the data presented here show.

Much of the information has been gathered by sending circulars to teachers. These contained the following questions, to which numerous replies were received : How many times have you used an agency ?

how many times have you secured positions? how long did you wait? what was the fee required? state any controversies over your contract, and how settled; what was required by the agent besides fees? state in detail any experience with these agents, and give any facts that throw light upon their methods. In addition numerous agencies were visited, and in some instances subscription fees were paid.

Teachers' agencies have a wide scope. Many have branch offices in various cities, and while intelligence offices are often content with a neighborhood, these agencies claim nothing less than the whole United States as their territory. Their influence is really national, for they send teachers into every conceivable town and hamlet. Their work is done largely by correspondence, and applicants are not, as a rule, personally known to them. They deal with a very intelligent class of workers, many of whom are not unemployed, and they are at present a chief medium through which vacancies in schools are filled.

The location, equipment, and system of the majority of them are quite beyond criticism. They are always in office buildings, and since they are merely registry bureaus there are none of the evils of waiting-rooms and undesirable associates. They confine their work to one line, so there are not various sources of income as a temptation for graft. There are two kinds of fees, collected solely from applicants for positions. The registration fee, usually called a subscription fee, is rarely less than \$2, is frequently \$5, is good only for "office services," and is never refunded. It is good usually for one



year, sometimes for two, and in a few instances is \$5 and \$10, good for a term of years. "Office services" means simply the privileges of enrolment, of visiting the office, and of speaking to the clerks, and it is in no instance considered as a payment for a position. Many thousands annually pay this fee and do not receive more than a receipt, and not always that, for some applicants only learn that the payment has been received when a request comes for renewal.

Agencies claim that this high registration fee is necessary to keep out undesirable applicants, and to cover the outlay necessary to secure positions. In reply to the first claim, the statement may well be made that the most undesirable applicants can often best afford such a fee; and as to the matter of outlay, if a registration fee must cover all expenses incident to obtaining positions, the large employment fee must be clear profit—and the question arises whether this income from the unemployed is legitimate. There is much evidence to show that this system has developed one type of teachers' agencies which lives entirely upon registration fees, and never attempts to get any positions, for from five hundred to one thousand registration fees annually, of from \$2 to \$5 each, yield a good income. Many teachers report: "I paid a registration fee, and never heard from it, except the request for renewal, at the end of the year, as they had 'something in view,' " and our investigation extended to only a few of the many thousands of teachers. So long as high registration fees are permitted, agencies will take applications, knowing from their long wait-

ing lists, or from the qualifications of the teachers, that they cannot fill them, and not one report shows that any agency has refunded this fee on the ground of over-registration.

This fee is required before any application will be filed, and there are other conditions. Most of the contracts read: "If a candidate secures a position in any way through us, even if it is one day after the two years expire, he must pay an additional membership fee." One agency charges \$3 in the main office and then informs its candidates that it has ten branch offices, and advises them to register in each one, at \$1 each, which is a reduction of \$2 from the regular fee. Thus, an agency which advertises that it covers the country requires a registration fee of \$13 to do it efficiently, as "each agency is independent, and the main office is not entitled to the service of any branch." In another, the charge is a \$2 consultation fee for "advice only." In one case, after a teacher had paid this amount she was advised to "try some other line, as the demand for women teachers is very small this year."

In addition, whenever a position is accepted, five per cent., and in a few instances ten per cent., of the entire first year's salary is due the agency. This must be paid at once, or one half at the end of the first month, and all within two months. It is never refunded, even if the position is lost, although the "agency agrees to use its influence to find another position." This is entirely a matter of its own conscience, however, for the temptation is to favor a new applicant whose percentage fee is not yet available; and there is no power to compel a return

of fees, for the applicant has already agreed to these terms in writing. Teachers must also pay a percentage on an increase of salary, within an agreed time, usually the first year, though it may occasionally be for two years. Where board is included as part of the salary it is included in the percentage estimate and is rated at from \$200 to \$400 per year. The following excerpt is typical, though different agencies have minor variations.

“Terms: 1. Consultation fee, two dollars in advance when the application is made. This is not a registration fee, but is a fee for advice given at the time this application is made. This application will be kept on file one year.

“2. A commission of five per cent. of salary for one year shall be paid this Agency by the applicant as soon as engagement is secured.

“Notes. (a) The commission is due upon one year's salary, regardless of the length of time the engagement continues, or at what time it is made. (b) Any applicant who secures a position to which this Agency has called his attention, or through the one called to his attention, whether within the year of registration or later, will be subject to the regular commission. (c) When the nominal salary includes board, commission upon this must be added, estimated at the rate of \$200 a year. (d) When income is accepted instead of salary, an advance payment of \$20 is required, the balance to be estimated and paid at the close of the first term. Ten per cent. on short engagements, of less than six months.

“3. All information received with this application is regarded as strictly confidential, to be used for the sole benefit of the applicant. All information as to position

received by the applicant is to be used by SELF ONLY; otherwise they will be RESPONSIBLE for the commission."

For substitute positions the charge varies from seven to ten per cent. of the wages for the entire time the position is held. Other provisions of contracts which favor the agency include the following: If an applicant has notice of a position not secured through the agency, she is required to return the agency's notice at once with the date of her prior information; otherwise it is understood that the teacher wishes the bureau's co-operation, and will pay the commission, though the agency may subsequently fill the position of which it notified her. If a teacher accepts a position from the agency, and subsequently gets a better one through other means, during the year, she pays percentage on the increase in wages.

A contract seems to give an agency a lien on a teacher for at least one year, and sometimes for longer. It requires considerable skill to find any rights or protection for the teachers in one of these contracts. Most contracts further require the teacher to give the agency any information about vacancies, and "if, by any inadvertence," one contract reads, "a fellow teacher through some other means gets a vacancy existing in the same school, through the neglect of the teacher to notify said agency, she makes herself responsible for five per cent. of the salary of that teacher." Instead of paying a commission for such services, the agency says to the teacher: For the privilege of paying us \$50 or \$75 for a position, you must also become an

unpaid canvasser through whom we may make other fees. An agency which makes such requirements never loses sight of a teacher. It sometimes uses threats of removal to compel fulfilment of contract, and when it has secured a teacher a position, and holds her references, it is in a position to make good any such threat. "Later information," simply hinted at to a school board, can cause all kinds of trouble, when a teacher is dependent upon a salary.

Teachers have found, when they have secured positions through friends, that agencies to which they have long belonged, and from which they have never heard, suddenly develop a personal interest, and appear with a chain of events showing how they are officially responsible for the position. If a teacher does not notify them that she has a position they assume that she meant to pay them, so either way she is reasonably sure to pay something, though the agency may compromise if it has not a good case.

Aside from this matter of large fees, one-sided contracts, and clever methods to secure fees, the work of teachers' agencies is clean. References are investigated with care, few cases of collusion appear to exist between agents and school boards, teachers are rarely sent out on false promises, and there is, in general, good faith, though many teachers charge favoritism in giving positions.

From the answers to questions sent out several things appear. Teachers usually register in more than one agency, and positions are offered in about one out of three. This is an estimate based on a small number of returns and so is only approximate. Applicants wait from "one week" until "forever,"

and a registry fee is not unlike an investment in a lottery—so much for a chance. Others say “four or five teachers are recommended for every position, so a man pays for the privilege of competing with others who are selected as his best opponents.” The agency wants one to win, it matters not who, for its fee is the same. From another point of view, this is, of course, admirable impartiality. Others testify: “Agencies advertise that they have special pulls with school boards, but results prove that this is often untrue and misleading”; “I regard some as reliable, while others are most untrustworthy”; “Certainly the better sort do much for teachers who have no wide acquaintance or have no friends to help them out”; and, “After patronizing an agency for several years, my name was kept on their list without a fee, and in at least two cases complimentary registration was given to friends of mine.” One teacher suggests, “that State and municipal agencies be started by school boards and educational associations, and some reduction of fees made, and agencies which charge such exorbitant fees be discriminated against.” Another “regrets that agencies show preference when an additional voluntary fee is in sight.”

On the whole, the evidence of teachers is favorable to “well-managed agencies,” but it clearly intimates that there are some that are not well managed. One explanation of the small number of complaints against them is, that there is no regulation, and they openly say in their contracts, “no positions guaranteed or fees refunded.” There are always two sides of a story, and teachers, being of the same human

kind as agents, in many instances try to "beat them out," but the latter at this stage certainly have the whip hand. From this investigation, it seems that when applicants for positions number about three to one, or it is even more disproportionate, that unlimited registration fees are an open door to fraud; and that when any agent deals with the unemployed, there should be not only fair regulations, but some one to whom they should be responsible. Fair limitation of fees, some provisions for refunding, and prevention of fraudulent advertising and false promises are not unreasonable requirements. A further investigation would undoubtedly indicate more clearly the need and nature of a law, to which both parties would agree. Certainly the demand exists for both investigation and improvement. It is becoming clear that lack of employment is more vitally related to crime, immorality, vice, dishonesty, degeneration, and conditions vitally affecting national life, than any other one condition, and this is true of professional men and women as well as of general laborers. Both need the fairest medium of exchange through which to secure the means of livelihood.

The second group of employment agencies, common in cities, seldom licensed, and so conducting business in their own way, are theatrical agencies. These are little known outside of the profession, are besieged by applicants, and wield an immense power, for unknown actors and singers are quite dependent upon them. They rarely charge managers, and fees from applicants for positions include the first week's wages, payable at once, or at the end of

the first week. Fees are never refunded, except through the occasional friendliness of a manager. Instead of waiting about the agency, applicants report every two days, or are notified. They frequently have two separate departments—musical and dramatic. Some are honest, and are a great boon to the unemployed, but there are others which need careful inspection. These take fees without offering positions, or are in collusion with speculators, who they know are irresponsible. They send out applicants with companies run by these speculators, knowing they will be stranded. But the agency gets its fee, and the speculator holds back part of the wages, so every one except the applicant profits. It seems scarcely necessary to add that some are supply stations for the fashionable disreputable houses. They have many such patrons, and advertise for fresh, bright, pretty girls, and prepare the way to these houses through chorus and vaudeville life and associates. They are in some instances rendezvous where dissipated and immoral people congregate for the purpose of leading astray the women who visit them for work. Reputable theatrical agencies need to unite to suppress these concerns. Every city should know how many theatrical agencies exist, and then ask itself what it knows of the way positions are found for young women who are drawn from out of town, homes, shops, stores, and schools by promises of stage life, with its glamour of fame and money.

Only the largest cities have agencies which supply artists' models, and they are usually without a license. Models for stores are secured largely through



advertising and occasionally through special agencies. The fees charged are not high. Both artist and model pay a fee varying from fifty cents upward, depending upon the probable length of the engagement. One agency makes a practice of sending models to artists without orders, hoping that they may prove attractive. They are charged a small fee when sent out, and later the artist gets a bill. If he protests, payment is not insisted upon. Sometimes they try to collect fees when one of their models is sent from one artist to another. The agencies are extremely careless in sending out models, often making no inquiry about the employer, and artists have such difficulty in securing reputable models who will remain that in New York the Art Workers' Club for Women has among its many other functions an agency which supplies models, and also furnishes lodgings for them. It also takes up cases of unpaid wages, and insists upon the keeping of engagements. In the course of our investigation we found that some disreputable places, running under the guise of studios because this gave them more license, were the best patrons of some of these agencies for models.

In all cities agencies exist for nurses. These include trained nurses, "handy women in sickness," and nurses for children. Some charge the employer no fee, and in these cases the assessment upon the nurses' wages is heavy. Some have registration fees, while others require an employment fee when a position is offered, and this is not always refunded if, for any reason, the nurse fails to secure that position. One agency in New York charges a \$5 registration

fee, good for one year, and ten per cent. of the wages earned. Such fees are disproportionate to the services rendered. A common complaint of employers is that they "juggle with references" and send incompetent nurses, in order to get the fees. Occasionally they furnish board and lodging. Those in New York are located chiefly in residences, and most of them are conducted as home enterprises. Much of the placing of nurses is done through other methods, and some intelligence offices place untrained and child-nurses. There are nurses' clubs which maintain free registers for trained nurses, and nurse-maids' schools, which charge employers \$1 and the employee pays no fee. Other societies maintain nurses' directories where the registration fees are as high as \$5, the employer's fee is \$2, and membership in the society is \$2 annually. There are few complaints against nurses' agencies.

A new kind of employment agency, of which a few exist, is called an Amusement Bureau. It advertises to furnish attractions for churches, clubs, and other organizations, such as lecturers, impersonators, singers, monologuists, and others. Twenty per cent. commission on the amount the applicant receives is the usual charge.

General commercial agencies are much more common than teachers' agencies, and supply mainly business houses and institutions. They furnish people for executive, clerical, and technical positions, and in some instances include factory employees. Some furnish men with high-grade positions; others only women stenographers and typewriters, and others are general offices for both men and women,

and are the most common. Almost without exception, these are in office buildings, and have a good business system. In all of them a registration fee is charged varying from \$1 to \$5. When it is as high as \$5 it is often called a subscription fee to a small periodical, published by the agency, but is necessary before an application will be filed. Except in Boston, these fees are never refunded, though the recent New York law limits this subscription to fifty cents. In Boston, this year, a bill was introduced, but failed of passage, exempting these agencies, so that they might retain the registration fee. In addition to the registration fee there is an employment fee, which is either the entire week's wages, or five per cent. of the first year's salary—whichever the agency prefers. If board is a part of the salary it is included. Employment fees are not refunded even if a position is lost, and this is a greater hardship than in teachers' agencies, for contracts are not always yearly. In methods and contracts these agencies most nearly resemble those for teachers. The following is an illustration of a one-sided contract, fee for signing \$5, which seems to the applicant to give him some claim when he signs it.

“ This agreement, made and entered into by and between the ——— Employment Co. and ———, applicant, both of ———, wherein said applicant seeks information relative to a position as ——— or other work of a similar nature, under the following terms and conditions:

“1st. That all fees paid to said ——— Employment Co. in advance are paid for the express purpose of defraying all incidental expenses in procuring information

in reference to the position desired and for services to be rendered by the said ——— Employment Co. in various ways.

“2d. It is further agreed and understood that the said ——— Employment Co. shall have thirty days if necessary, in which to furnish the applicant employment, and that no money will be refunded and no position guaranteed.

“3d. It is also agreed and understood that in the event of the said ——— Employment Co. procuring said applicant employment, said applicant agrees to pay said ——— Employment Co. ten per cent. of the amount of the first month's salary arising from such employment.”

Another contract at \$3, reads: “I shall in no way hold manager responsible for failure of service.”

Other offices, wishing to give the appearance of honesty, charge a large registration fee, and then say they will refund one half if a position is not secured. Almost any agency could carry on business on these half-fees. Commercial agencies know the tricks of sending men to places where no work exists, and of clipping advertisements and giving them out as *bona-fide* orders. By their irresponsible advertisements, young men and women are drawn into the city on promises of work. In some instances where men have refused to pay registration fees, they have been insolently sent out. The rule, however, is not to place any limitation upon the number of registration fees, regardless of the waiting list or the condition of the labor market. Some agencies which supply typewriters charge thirty per cent. of the first month's wages, while others insist that the applicant rent a machine at \$10 a

month. An association of stenographers charges \$1 registration fee, and forty per cent. of the first month's salary, and says it is able to place one third of its applicants.

In commercial agencies, where there are no limitation of the registration fee, and no conditions of refunding fees, the tricks and frauds appear to be less, for money can be secured openly as a right, and if no return is made that is a part of the risk. Because of the high-grade men and women whom such agencies supply, their work is necessarily cleaner, and fraudulent concerns are often run out by postal authorities, or through prosecutions by intelligent patrons.

Agencies which furnish women, especially stenographers and type writers, are extremely careless where they send them. They take but little trouble to ascertain if it is a reputable business house or office, or send employees to places which they know have bad reputations. In one where we were waiting, a well-dressed, good-looking, gentlemanly appearing man came in and told the agent he was in "need of a young, lovable, good-looking stenographer; one afraid of pin-pricks need not apply." He left his address, and asked that one be sent on trial. As soon as he had left, the agent came in and proclaimed to the waiting employees in a loud tone: "Young ladies, you heard the gentleman's order; is there any one wants to go?" and three volunteered, and were sent off amid the jibes of their associates. But it is the indifference and carelessness which is most appalling. No other medium of exchange insists upon knowing so much about employees and so little about employers.

These conditions in some commercial agencies have been recognized, and each city has at least one agency which endeavors to improve the situation. In Boston the business office of the Woman's Educational and Industrial Union requires no registration fee, and charges but forty per cent. of the first week's salary. It carefully investigates references, and knows the character of the employers. It also seeks to make contracts more permanent, frankly advises its applicants, has a protective committee which is interested in the collection of wages unjustly withheld, and looks up advertisements, and a befriending committee which assists unemployed women. The Christian Associations for both men and women conduct agencies in most cities, charge reasonable fees, and are careful to send employees to responsible employers. In New York City the Alliance Employment Bureau has taken the initiative. It has a personal and advisory relation to its employees, improper advertisements are guarded against, responsible boarding-house lists are kept, and it co-operates with trade schools, and domestic training classes in settlements. One of its most helpful lines of work is placing factory and store girls, in need of outdoor life, in positions in country hotels and boarding-houses. St. Bartholomew's, in New York, and other agencies of its class, have professional and mercantile departments, and have reduced the fees somewhat. In Boston there is an agency established on model lines which furnishes only factory employees.

In Philadelphia, as the result of this investigation, the Philadelphia Commercial Agency has been

opened, for the clean methods and efficiency of which the *Public Ledger* has undertaken the responsibility. Fees have been reduced to a registration of fifty cents for both employer and employee, and ten per cent. of the first month's wages when a position is secured. This has the advantage of an advisory board consisting of leading business men; and both the character of the employers and the reliability of references are ascertained.

In Chicago the Business Woman's Exchange charges a membership fee of \$1, good for six months for all positions paying under \$10, and \$2 for all above that, and there is no other fee. This agency has a personal interest in applicants, and refuses fees from undesirable candidates, while it advises those who are well placed to remain with present employers, instead of inducing them to leave for a new fee. It has a rest room, typewriter machines for practice, and conducts a school of stenography and typewriting.

All of these agencies are strictly business offices, but are not conducted purely for financial returns, and represent rather the reaction against the prevailing conditions.

A second class of agency is that run by typewriter companies. These are rarely licensed because they charge no fee. The only advantage to the companies is that girls learn to use their machines, for they are given this opportunity while waiting, and are often induced to purchase, for the agency is usually in the salesroom. There are a few exceptions. One firm insists that the applicants placed shall use its machines, while another says in its con-

tract, that applicants are expected to notify it of any other vacancies, and to recommend the office for repairing machines, etc. These are run largely for advertising purposes.

In this same class fall business colleges which conduct employment departments. These are not licensed, because the placing of its graduates is not the main business. Many such colleges prevent their pupils from falling into the hands of unscrupulous agencies. But unfortunately there are some who use this promise of employment to swell their roll, with the result that many are trained for business careers when they should be in kitchens and shops. Consequently, both employer and employee suffer. Sometimes in rush seasons of big houses these colleges hurriedly train for this work large numbers of pupils whom they attract by promises of work. They are employed by these houses only for a few weeks, and after they have paid their money for tuition they often cannot get positions elsewhere. One charge business men make is, that many business colleges have no entrance requirements, but open their courses to any one who has the money. A few give the pupils experience in business houses while in training, and many business men prefer reliable colleges, as they are the responsible reference. Such methods as advertising "Special—Wanted 100 men to fill our orders with down-town business houses," and then requiring them to take at least a month's training, regardless of previous qualifications, are very near the line of false and misleading promises.

An unsuccessful attempt has recently been made



in Illinois to have these licensed, and the attorney-general has given the following opinion :

“ The main object of such schools is to teach their students typewriting, stenography, ordinary correspondence, etc., and not to procure employment for them. The promise made in the catalogue of such institutions was merely by way of advertisement, and I do not suppose it would be contended that such advertising would impose a contract obligation upon them to procure employment for their students, but that comes more in the way of a gratuity on the part of the school, and is not a part of the business in which the school, as such, engages.”

A new departure is the high-school agency at Charlestown, Massachusetts. Its object is to secure positions for its graduates before they have to resort to a regular employment agency. It has received much recognition from business men. No fees are charged and the recommendations are by the principal. Teachers often make individual efforts for their pupils, but this is a distinct attempt to conduct a high-school agency.

Many colleges now have bureaus of self-help which are agencies for students. They usually have a manager and some are conducted on a large scale, and supply many hundreds of places. Much of the employment furnished is of a temporary nature, but these bureaus sustain so active a relation to the business community that they are in reality well-equipped and -conducted employment agencies.

There are other commercial agencies which charge no fee. These are conducted by newspapers. They are run on good business principles, and are in reality

employment departments of the paper. In these, advertisements at a low rate are a requirement. One paper requires at least one advertisement inserted before an application is filed, though its charge never exceeds twenty-five cents. The advantage to the paper is the increased advertising and circulation, for the agency otherwise does not pay. Such is the *North American* agency in Philadelphia.

A recent movement in some of the larger cities has been made by the Masonic order, which has opened commercial agencies for its members. These are well equipped and conducted, and have a salaried manager. The agency for Brooklyn reported for last year over 2500 men placed.

There are a few so-called "reference bureaus." In addition to finding employment these make themselves responsible for references. They charge extra fees for especially investigating or furnishing references. Their work is chiefly in connection with business houses requiring responsible men. Fees are necessarily high, ranging from \$5 to \$20. In New York it has been necessary to prosecute some concerns masquerading under this name to the detriment of the honest ones. One, recently opened, charged the small sum of twenty-five cents for investigating references, and then sent the applicants to an office address which could not be found. The elevator boy said about fifty a day came there for a time. When the applicants returned, they were assured it was a mistake over the telephone, and they would hear to their advantage in a few days. Such cheap concerns can only creep in under lax laws.

These reference agencies should not be confused with Reference and Bond Associations, which are not employment agencies.

The miscellaneous agencies which have come to our knowledge are chiefly freak concerns which seem to belong to no one class. They are of interest in showing how varied are the classes of the unemployed, and how eager they are to grasp any scheme which seems to promise work.

One of the most interesting of these is an agency with headquarters at Chicago, which has cripples for its patrons. This was investigated by the Associated Charities, and their report, kindly placed at our disposal, shows that this company advertises to furnish cripples with positions and work. Instead of bringing an employer and employee together, as the offer intimates, the cripple is offered a supply of cheap jewelry to sell on the streets, or elsewhere. The jewelry is purchased at wholesale, and sold at an immense profit. They do not manufacture these goods, but their "agency" is a small room filled with this jewelry. Some cripples interviewed admitted purchasing there; others said the prices were far beyond those of any other firm, while the manager said he was in the business only to help cripples, and had lost \$10,000 in his philanthropy. The second part of the scheme is to send out a circular with two or three samples of jewelry, chiefly to small towns and rural districts, though cities are included. The circular states that this jewelry is made by cripples, who are trying to make themselves self-supporting and finally establish a hospital. If the person addressed does not wish to keep it, he

can return it in the self-addressed envelope which accompanies the samples. If he retains them, he is to remit twenty-five cents for articles worth about a cent on a pushcart and two in a store. The cripples are drawn into the scheme when they apply for work, and the buyer is drawn into it from sympathetic and philanthropic motives. The risk in sending out the jewelry is small, for the method has an air of trustfulness and candor that appeals to people, and few would want to have unpaid-for collar buttons, made by cripples, on their conscience.

But the profits are evidently so enormous that any failures to return a few sets of jewelry are amply covered. Many order goods because they think the price low, and that they are helping charity. No membership fee is charged cripples—they buy their supplies outright. This agency also advertises: "To any church or organization having a debt to liquidate we will submit a proposition whereby school children may be utilized to pay the same." They also state that they will be indebted for a list of residents in a town (not merchants). Any small favors like this are, of course, acceptable to a firm which helps cripples to find employment!

Another agency finds matrimony a good method of employment. It advertises for the various kinds of office help, "with good eyes, and good health, who will remain several years." Answers to applicants come on stationery which bears as its heading: "Honorable matrimonial intentions imperative." A visit to the office reveals a dirty, dilapidated, second-rate place, and applicants are solicited for an advertisement in its marriage paper, or are induced to

correspond with men who want wives. Fees are charged for the advertisement, and a high percentage when an engagement follows. The matrimonial venture is the main issue, and the ruse of employment attracts girls.

## CHAPTER X

### FREE EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Sources of information : Visits to agencies and reports.

ANY study of employment agencies would be incomplete without some account of the work which is being done by various religious societies, by philanthropic and charitable organizations, and by the Government. There are so many different forms, that only a few can be indicated.

The attempts of religious organizations to furnish employment through agencies are numerous in all cities. Prominent among these are those conducted by churches. Some of the large institutional churches have pay agencies conducted on a business basis. But the majority of them are small and do not charge fees. They are usually located in the parish or mission house and are occasionally in charge of paid workers, but more often under a committee. There are all grades of equipment and methods, some being simply registry places where names are left, while others have agents in the field looking up patrons. Some limit their work to their own members, others are open to all. Some are for men, others for women; some require references, others do not; some are open part of the year and others all of the year. Usually the employment work is

but a small part of the other church or mission work and does not receive any especial emphasis. One of the most common methods of church societies, instead of conducting regular agencies, is to furnish home work in the shape of sewing to women unable to take positions. Frequently, various forms of aid are combined with the furnishing of employment. One religious organization places men in factories and in workshops as apprentices and cares for the family in the meantime; secures contracts for women in homes; and sends young men out to be trained in agricultural work.

In addition to the church agencies a few of the Young Women's and Young Men's Christian Associations have free agencies, but the majority of these charge small fees. They are usually simply places of registry for members and their friends. In Philadelphia these are open to members and outsiders as well. In the other cities small fees are charged. Occasionally, as in Boston, the Salvation Army conducts a free office; in other cities, as New York, where there is an extensive system with branch offices, a small fee is charged. As a rule they have good managers, fair systems, and secure employment for a large number of people. They do not usually require references, and find positions for many domestics and general laborers.

Religious agencies are not open to the frauds described under Chapter III., and are strictly moral, and with the exception of those which are established on a business basis the charges brought against them are that they lack system, are inefficient, and are not in serious competition with

private agencies. This is unquestionably true, but it may be that they are judged too harshly. Usually such employment departments are merely a small part of a whole plan of work; they are often started during emergencies and frequently seek to place only the unemployed of their own parishes or districts, or work within a narrow circle. When they depart from this plan they are usually business enterprises and charge fees. But certainly they do a considerable amount of placing, and establish personal relations of much advantage to many employees. With a unity of action, and a more active interest in the whole problem of the unemployed, these religious agencies possess an immense power for both relief and regulation of evils in pay agencies.

Another class of religious agencies is found in seaport towns. These are immigrant homes and there are several types. Some are exclusively for men, others are for women, and a few are for both. These homes are usually supported by some church or religious society. They have missionaries at the ports, who meet unprotected immigrants and take them to the home. Here they are lodged at low rates, sometimes free, and the home finds employers and sends them out to them. These homes are absolutely essential, and aside from caring for the immigrants when they first arrive, they are social centres. One has a mid-week and Sunday meeting to which all girls holding places are invited to come, and they are urged to spend their evenings there. Girls who are not ill enough to go to a hospital may come there and rest. Fifty cents a day is the charge



for immigrants, and this includes board and lodging, storage of baggage, and the privilege of the laundry. In many instances this payment is not insisted upon, but girls are expected to pay it when able. In some other homes the charges are higher, and in one the rates are as high as \$1.50 per day. There is no fee charged for positions as a rule. These homes require references of employers. References of employers signed by saloon-keepers are not accepted in one such home, and care is taken to protect the girls in all of them. Although for one nationality, they frequently befriend girls of other nationalities. They are not on a business basis, but have religious and social functions.

But the need of protection for immigrant women is so great that even these homes have to be carefully inspected, lest they become careless. A recent investigation by the Ellis Island authorities of one of these homes in New York revealed the fact that it was being run for private gain. The immigrants were compelled to buy cheap articles, as guide books, jewelry, etc., and the home received fees from an employment agency for turning over to them the immigrants.

It is impossible to put into this brief description of immigrant homes any idea of their value when intelligently and honestly conducted. The helplessness of the unemployed immigrants gave rise to their establishment, and the personal, sympathetic, and friendly work which they do prevents many from going astray and gives them a refuge among strangers.

The second large division of employment agencies

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is the charitable, which deals with the various classes of helpless, unfortunate, and dependent persons. Among these are agencies which secure work for mothers and children. In New York the State Charities Aid runs an admirable employment department, placing some five hundred persons a year. These mothers are unmarried, dependent, or deserted, and come to the society from institutions, homes, etc. They are placed only in country places, no charge is made, and transportation is usually furnished by the employer. All employers' references must bear the names of three persons and are carefully investigated. These places are secured by advertising, and by the neighborhood work done by the employers who have previously secured employees. They are placed almost entirely in households. Employers prefer mothers and children because the wages are about one third less; they remain longer, and it is hard to get country help. To the employee just coming from a maternity hospital with a baby, or deserted, it means keeping her child from an institution. The increase in wife desertion is a serious problem, and such agencies help to meet it on the industrial side. In addition, it renders such other services as, acting as bankers; social headquarters, where the women are asked to come when they have a day off in the city; redeeming pawn pledges; and making purchases for women out of town. In Boston, the Association for Aiding Destitute Mothers and Children does this work, and in addition has a lodging-house where women may stay for twenty-five cents a night. It also has an industrial department, where the women are taught

sewing. In Chicago, the Illinois Children's Aid Society has a department for placing mothers and children. These agencies do a very important work and are thoroughly reliable.

For discharged convicts, the Prisoners' Aid Associations have employment departments. In New York, the Woman's Prison Association co-operates with the Isaac T. Hopper Home, which was founded for inebriate women. They are sent there by the prison visitors, and must remain one month without drinking before their pay begins, or before they are placed in households. This agency and home conducts a laundry where the women are employed while on probation. They cannot leave without permission and if they come back intoxicated are dismissed. The demand for household workers exceeds the supply even at this institution.

For men, such organizations as the Central Howard Association do the work. This covers the Middle Western States. It is supported by subscriptions, and its object is to secure employment for ex-prisoners, acting as a sort of first friend. It extends the advantages of the parole law and the indeterminate sentence. It gets into correspondence with men in prisons and helps them when they are released on parole, and it has representatives who get acquainted with employers and secure positions, and others who give their time to investigating cases and looking out for boys. Its work is peculiarly difficult, for many employers will not take prisoners. Sometimes fellow-workers refuse to associate with them, and policemen report their history and they are discharged. Such associations

have well-established and -equipped offices, and of course there are no fees, though men are encouraged to return, when convenient, the amounts actually expended for them.

Industrial Aid Societies are employment agencies. They furnish both permanent and transient work for both men and women free of charge, and many are sent to the country. They especially aid persons who are able to work only a part of the time. Relief is given in homes, also, and such societies are interested in other work as vacant-lot cultivation, etc. They do much soliciting among employers, but they have a very unreliable class of employees, as they are so often inefficient or are benevolent charges. It is a class for which some agencies must exist, as pay agencies would only defraud them, for they could scarcely recommend them or secure them permanent positions.

Associated Charities have for the most part abandoned employment agencies, but they had at one time well-defined departments. The New York and Philadelphia Associations now confine their work to furnishing relief by actual employment, as in woodyards and laundries. The United Hebrew Charities in New York has an Industrial Removal Society and an employment agency with which it co-operates, but they are now independent. This Association until this year had one of the best-managed agencies in New York. In Boston the Federation of Jewish Societies have an employment agency which places few in the city, but sends families out of the city, and furnishes money for tools, furniture, and transportation. They also pay board for two

weeks' instruction and send out families as boarding-house keepers. They co-operate also with Jewish boarding-houses, where immigrants may stay one day or longer without charge. Associated Charities keep a list of reliable agencies for reference.

Settlements frequently have employment agencies. They have one person in charge of this branch who takes the orders and looks up employees. Their work is confined to women who go out for days' work, or as household employees. No charge is made, and it is run as an accommodation to those working with the settlement. Many worthy persons are placed each year. Others, as in New York, co-operate with reliable agencies. A few which have large boys' clubs do especially good work in securing work for them.

Boston has a temporary home for working women which is also an employment agency. Any woman willing to work can remain a stated length of time and pay her board by doing work in the laundry, kitchen, or sewing-room, and is placed in outside positions as soon as found.

Some of the great department stores, especially in Chicago, have free employment bureaus for the accommodation of customers. One has conducted such a bureau for several years. The number of applicants for work has been as high as two hundred and three hundred per day, and places filled, or situations secured from one hundred to one hundred and fifty per day. Naturally this became burdensome, and the bureau was recently abolished. Chiefly domestic and restaurant help was registered. In another store operating a free employment

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bureau, during sixteen weeks there were 3957 applicants for work, and 2591 permanent positions secured, besides some ten or twelve temporary positions filled daily at restaurants. This restaurant help is not registered, but is sent out immediately on the call of any restaurant for additional help. This bureau only registers women household employees, and in this alone has averaged 247 applicants for work per week.

There are also a number of City Employment or Ladies' Employment Societies which give out work, but they find but few positions and have no offices.

The third class of free employment agencies is that established and supported by the State or municipality. The motives for establishing these appear to be three: To furnish a medium of exchange; to conciliate the labor vote; and to regulate the abuses in private agencies. Primarily they aim to bring employer and employee into communication, and by supervision to secure the best possible adjustment.

These free labor agencies have been established in fifteen States—Ohio, Montana, New York, Nebraska, Illinois, Missouri, Colorado, Iowa, Washington, California, Maryland, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Kansas, and Connecticut—and have been discontinued in three—Colorado, Montana, and Iowa. This year two other States have made attempts—Minnesota with a strong prospect of success, and Massachusetts, where the bill failed. The first one was established in Ohio in 1890, after a strong labor agitation. The provisions of these laws vary, but

the object is the same. Three types exist. The Ohio law creates one agency in each of the five large cities. Their management is vested in the Commissioner of Labor and Statistics, and superintendents and clerks are appointed by him. The general expenses are defrayed by the State, but the salaries of officers are borne by the cities in which they are located. Each superintendent makes a weekly report. The second type is found in New York, where all expenses are paid by the State, \$5000 being appropriated annually. There is but one agency of the third type, namely the municipal free office, in Seattle, Washington, under a civil service commission and a board of business men. The essential features of free employment agencies are, thus: establishment and maintenance by the Government; management by appointees of State labor commissions; absence of all fees; and collection and publication of labor statistics through them.

As a medium of exchange some of these agencies have been remarkably successful, especially in the Middle Western States. They furnish reliable places where men and women can seek positions without charge, and where an honest effort is made to furnish them with such. Where they are not so successful there are satisfactory explanations. In some cases, as New York, the appropriations are so small that they are unable to compete with the fine system and excellent field service of agencies which spend thousands of dollars yearly. Where they have been established at a distance from the labor centres, as at the capital in Nebraska, they cannot reach the supply. Where the managers are political ap-

pointees, as is so often the case, they are not, as a rule, as well qualified as business men.

The employees furnished by free agencies include general laborers, household help, some skilled workers, as mechanics, etc., and many farm hands. A new organization called the Western Association of Free Employment Bureaus promises to make this placing of farm hands very effective. Its object is to secure and distribute labor of all kinds in and between the separate States; to secure special rates from railways for idle laborers, and to provide for the distribution of help where it is most needed, especially in wheat regions. It has also the broader policy of co-operation for the betterment of other industrial conditions. This is the first attempt to model the work of free agencies upon interstate conditions.

Hitherto the success of these agencies has been judged almost entirely from statistics; and without wishing to detract from their success, or the belief that they have an unlimited opportunity for good, so much reliance has been placed on these statistics as a measure of their effectiveness that they fall short of reaching their highest possibilities. Statistics may be misleading in several ways. In one agency it was found that whenever men were given temporary jobs for a day or week, as cleaning off snow, etc., they were included in the lists. To make statistics reliable, distinctions should be made between temporary and permanent jobs, to avoid one man's being placed ten or fifteen times a year as though all were permanent.

In 1901, a report was made to the Bureau of



Charities of Chicago on the workings of the three employment agencies in that city, and the following facts were brought out :

“Reports are made to the Commissioner of Labor each week and published, but the law prohibits any official or private inspection, so these reports can never be verified. A man may register at the same office more than once, and each is counted as a new application. Persons who do not receive positions immediately upon application lose all prospect of employment, so there is a tendency to register, so as to be fresh on the lists. A man is encouraged to apply at all agencies, being told that his chances are better. There is no interchange of reports, and there can be no estimate of the amount of duplication. Yet, with the knowledge that men do apply at all the offices and are constantly encouraged to do so, we still find that seventy-eight per cent. of all those who apply secure positions. One would almost be justified in concluding from these figures that after duplications had been eliminated, the number of positions secured would be near or quite one hundred per cent. of the number of applications. It is to be noted in this connection that section 11 of the Statute provides that one of the causes for which a superintendent of a free employment office may be removed is ‘an unexplained low percentage of positions secured to applicants for situations.’ ”

The report further says :

“Permanent positions seem to be secured for comparatively few persons. The floating lodging-house population makes up a large percentage of those who receive employment, and the work given is ordinarily of a temporary character. Little apparent effort is made to

reach employers. Some circulars are distributed and advertising done, and the law requires that factory and mine inspectors shall report to the State agencies such opportunities as they may observe in the performance of other duties. We are informed that this provision is disregarded.

“Besides the duplication which occurs in the different State agencies, as described above, other evidence of straining a point to make a showing are not wanting. For instance, it is considered important to show by the reports that persons representing a wide range of occupation register their names for positions. While substantially for the same occupations, they appear in the statistics under different names. One instance will suffice to illustrate this. The north side office classifies a certain kind of female applicants for employment as under the head of ‘General Work.’ The south side office uses the classification of ‘Housework’ for the same kind of applicants. The west side office for the same kind of applicants uses the term ‘Domestics.’ In the list of different occupations represented, appear the three items ‘Domestics, General Work, and Housework.’ In addition to these three headings, the following are found in the list of occupations of women: ‘Housekeepers, kitchen help, pantry work, second work.’ The applicants seem to be sent to positions with comparatively little regard for their qualifications and with no attention to priority of application. The latest applicant seems ordinarily to be the favored one.

“Our study of the situation leads us to the conclusion that whatever is good in the free employment system may be preserved and strengthened, and whatever experience has shown to be bad or unnecessary may be largely eliminated without serious difficulty. We would suggest first of all that a thorough official inquiry be made into all the

details of the operation of the agencies; the investigating committee to have authority to disregard the statute which prohibits an inspection of the lists of applicants for positions. We believe that such an investigation would show that a single office in Chicago, properly equipped and managed in a business-like way will be able to do all the work required, and to do it better than it has been done. This would immediately eliminate all duplication and padding of statistics. It would reduce expenses without in any way reducing the number of persons who would patronize the agencies. We believe more attention should be given to interesting employers. At present these agencies are little more than registration bureaus."

The report closes:

"It may be of interest to add that a good many applicants for employment have been referred to the State agencies by the Chicago Bureau of Charities, and so far as we are informed not one of the number has ever succeeded in securing employment through them."

This abstract is given simply to show that too much reliance upon unexplained statistics may be misleading and that free agencies are not by any means free from evils. It is indeed a serious question if, under the present methods of management, free labor agencies reach their highest efficiency. Speaking of the New York City agency, one of the most prominent New York workers for the unemployed said:

"It is inadequate and does not meet the needs. Its head is a politician who stays in the office and does not come into contact with business men. When the office was opened, a working woman's club agency had a

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patronage of some two thousand people of good family. They transferred it to this office. The treatment and methods there were such that these patrons would not go there, both in manner of officials and arrangement of rooms. We have sent men there repeatedly, and they have not received work, and it has degenerated into a place where only domestics seem sure of positions. No efforts are made to get work except sending out circulars and occasionally advertising. It is a mistake to put a politician in charge when it needs a business man who can be an agent and come into contact with business men and employers and keep in touch with business life."

Of course in New York, with a Republican State office in the midst of a Tammany-governed city, the odds are tremendously against a superintendent.

It is not impossible for free State agencies to be careless in placing women employees, and from the records of a Woman's Protective Association, so late as 1902, we find that they were protesting against free agencies' sending women as employees to disreputable places. One woman was sent to two notoriously bad hotels, and it was a free agency which sent the Larson girl to a river boat where she was murdered. As a result of this protest they use more care. There is no reason why State agencies should not be as careful about employees, references, etc., as private agencies, and this evidence shows that the men at the head cannot be too vigilant.

In justice to free agencies, the explanation of their inefficiency must be placed, first, upon the small appropriation. The State expects them to compete successfully with an old established business on a

sum too meagre to pay clerk hire, to say nothing of expenses for solicitors, advertising, etc. Salaries of from \$1000 to \$1500 for superintendents will not attract men capable of making a business success, for they are doing this at a higher figure elsewhere. Offices cannot even be fitted up in a manner to attract desirable employers. There are private agencies in New York worth \$25,000 a year, and the free agency on \$5000 must compete with such. Second. Inefficiency may be due to political appointments. Usually men are selected primarily for political reasons and are rarely business men having a wide acquaintance with business houses and men. The private agency keeps no employee who is not of value to it, and he is retained only so long as he hustles for the office. But political appointees are too secure, and private employment agency managers constantly outclass them by commanding more brains and money.

As successful competitors, free agencies have not reached their highest efficiency. As regulators of private agencies they are a failure. Ohio, which has succeeded in reducing the number, has recently passed regulations of private agencies; and additional legislation covering private agencies has been found necessary in other States. Boston has the best regulation of private agencies, and has no free bureau. New York has six hundred agencies, and the worst conditions while a free agency exists; and in Chicago there are about 115 licensed agencies, and many abuses, with three free agencies. Both of the latter have added special restrictions upon private agencies.

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When the enforcement of the laws regulating private agencies is entrusted to free employment agents, as is the case in many States, the policy is at best a doubtful one. The free agency is a competitor and its spirit is to "run out other offices." If private agencies are licensed by the State, they should be permitted to conduct an honest business upon the fairest terms possible and are entitled to the State's protection. But when the free agency enforces the law, it has access to the books of every private agency, can study and adopt its business methods, and profit by them. We believe there are some honest offices which would co-operate with a department enforcing the law, but not in direct competition; but now, good and bad together all unite against the free agency. In the States where free agencies exist the tendency is to urge harsh legislation against private agencies. But in the present state of imperfection of free agencies, this would remove a public servant without an adequate substitute. Private agencies are performing an important and legitimate economic function, and until the State or city has tested what an adequate system of regulation and inspection will do, it is an unjust discrimination to consider all of them as bad, for any business conducted purely for gain without regulation will develop undesirable qualities, as is seen in factories, tenements, etc.

Some free agencies have been organized as a matter of political expediency and used as sources of patronage. Some, having served this purpose, have been discontinued. Only political reasons could give Chicago three independent offices when New

York has but one. As a means of political expediency they are less important than they promised, for they have in a measure failed to draw the unemployed from other avenues. Others have been established as a popular movement, and have not justified their existence. There are some further disadvantages and some marked failures of free agencies to meet the real need of the unemployed. They have a tendency to pauperize, and for this reason many will not patronize them. Any service secured without cost is more or less underrated, and men who have money will not go there, often because they say others will think them "broke." If it costs nothing to secure a position, both employer and employee feel less obligation, and the slightest provocation tends to break the relationship. Under the present arrangement the best class of employers will not patronize free public offices. This is especially true of women. The equipment, the waiting-rooms, the conditions under which employers must converse with and engage employees are such that employers will not submit to them. Girls will not frequent them, because they know these desirable employers are not to be found there. Such are the statements of many employers and employees who have been questioned. Thus far these agencies have not solved the great problem of immigrant labor, which is serious in all seaport towns. They are usually in charge of English-speaking officials, and if an immigrant Slav, Italian, Pole, or Jew found his way there, he would be quite helpless. Even if they understood him, he would have more faith in a humbug who spoke his own language.

These agencies have not improved the conditions under which employees wait in the better offices. They are clean, not overcrowded, but here also the applicant must sit in idleness day after day, fearing to be absent lest he lose his position. The agitation of one State for a reading-room shows a realization of this condition. To a small extent these agencies attract vagrants to the cities in which they are, and they may become loafing centres, unless this tendency is carefully guarded.

If these are the defects and disadvantages, it must not be forgotten that as they stand they are of immense value. They do offer a place where a man without money can get a job, they are free from the dangers of fraud and immorality, and they have a friendly interest in the applicant. Free agencies are comparatively new and the public is often disposed to expect too much of them and so to underestimate their good work. But the municipal free agency seems to come nearer the ideal than the State agency. The only one in existence is in Seattle, Washington, and is supported by the city under the civil service commission, and is a business success. This agency differs from State agencies, in that the Labor Commissioner is in direct charge of the office and has no other work; it has general labor, domestic, and mercantile departments, and is governed by a board of business men; although local, its employees are sent to widely distant places. Such success demonstrates that the principle of free agencies is a good one, and the present defects are due chiefly to methods and management.

Advocates of free agencies in the United States



argue that they are successful in France, England, and Germany, and regulate private agencies. A glance at the methods used in Germany explains the success. The system is national. Each province has a central office and there are many branch offices. All these branches send their lists to the central agency, then all the central agencies in the various States exchange bi-weekly lists. These include both unfilled places and applications. Then a list for the whole State is made and posted in each sub-agency. Not only this, but the office secures half rates on the railways, and there is an excellent police inspection of private agencies. The fundamental principle of the German agencies is equal representation, its board of managers consisting of three each of employers and employees, and its chairman is chairman of the Trades Council. Its whole atmosphere is business rather than politics. Aside from its superior organization it is adapted to existing conditions such as the concentration of population in small areas. France has a system which also covers the country, and all co-operate with the agency at headquarters. Even France has found that, with her excellent system, private agencies were not regulated, and has passed a law which provides for the suppression of all pay agencies. Under the law, free agencies may be created at will by municipalities, syndicates of working men or employers, and by laborers' and farmers' exchanges. In every commune a register setting forth offers and demands for work is to be opened at the mayor's office. Classified lists must be prepared and interchanged, and in all communes of more than ten thousand inhabitants

there must be a municipal office. Theatrical and similar agencies are not included in this new law. The best that this country has is one or several offices in a State, under one commissioner, but independent in working. Such a perfect system as in Germany and France might be possible for a State, but scarcely for the country.

## CHAPTER XI

### STATE AND MUNICIPAL LAWS

Sources of information : Municipal records and ordinances; statutes; United States and State labor reports, and letters from officials in States where no legislation exists. (From every State information was requested, and any misstatements and omissions are largely due to the insufficiency or negligence of these replies.)

THE unemployed class and employment agencies are both so numerous that necessarily some legislation exists. The most popular form has been the establishment of free employment agencies by the State, the success of which has been previously discussed. A few States have undertaken the actual regulation of private agencies, and have passed ordinances and statutes. Ordinances are usually more effective, since they are based on the needs of a particular community, which knows something of its own conditions; while the latter are often so abridged and amended, when finally passed, that they leave many loopholes when enforcement is attempted.

In a few States legislation adequately meets the situation; in others it is simply a blot upon the statutes. In seventeen States there is some kind of regulation, while in the remainder attempts have failed, or the need of it has not been recognized. This is particularly true of the Southern, Middle,

and far Western States. Letters from officials in the large cities of these States indicate that all of the abuses common to agencies exist, and that there is a growing consciousness of the need of regulation. In all legislation, frauds are more fully recognized than are immoral practices. For purposes of comparison, and for the suggestive value to communities in need of legislation, an epitome of each of the existing laws is given. California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin have State laws; and Detroit, Michigan, Providence, Rhode Island, and Seattle, Washington, have passed ordinances.

CALIFORNIA.—This law was passed in 1903, and prohibits: the tender of valuables for mere office services, and the payment of fees until a position is offered; if the employee fails to get a position, and it is through no fault of his own, the fee must be returned, and shall not exceed ten per cent. of the amount of the first month's wages; tax collectors collect the license fees, and report the names and addresses of the agencies to the Bureau of Labor; a written record must be kept, showing the names of the applicants, the amount of the fees, and the nature of the application, together with the reason for not obtaining employment; these records are open to inspection by the Commissioner of Labor; violation of the law is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine not exceeding \$500 or imprisonment not exceeding six months. In addition to this State law, San Francisco requires an additional license fee

of \$16 per quarter, and the sanction of the police commissioner before a license is issued.

For a State containing a city the size and importance of San Francisco, this law is inadequate. It does not touch the immoral conditions; it ignores the many adroit schemes of extortion from both employer and employee; it neglects the lodging-house situation and location of agencies, whether in saloons, gambling dens, etc.; and does not provide for the one essential of an effective law—frequent, systematic inspection.

COLORADO.—This law imposes a fine of \$100 for not obtaining a license; cities are empowered to pass rules and regulations not in the State laws; the license must be publicly exposed in the agency; a receipt must be given, stating terms on its face, and the money must be refunded if these are violated; but five per cent. of the first month's salary and board from men and but three per cent. from women, may be charged; they may not send women to immoral places under penalty of \$100 fine; help may not be sent out without a written *bona-fide* order with proper references of two responsible people, under penalty of a fine; dividing fees with contractors is sufficient cause for revocation of the license; the agency must register every order, with the address, number of persons in the family, nature of the work, wages, and time when employees are sent out; for misstatements or for false promises concerning work, or for failure to keep the register, the license may be revoked; the license fee is \$100, the bond \$1000, and a \$5 fee is required for the transfer of a license.

This is one of the best laws in existence, and some of the provisions are especially worthy of consideration, since they cover specific evils. It unfortunately does not provide for inspection and ignores conditions of lodging, gifts, and location of agencies.

**CONNECTICUT.**—There must be a license and it must designate the street and number; no agency may be in any building where liquor is sold; the register must be in English and contain the name and address; the fee or valuable article may not exceed \$2, and a receipt must be given, stating the name, amount of fee, kind of employment, and a separate receipt giving the name and address to which the employee is sent; when work is not obtained or accepted within one month, the full amount of the fee must be returned, if demand is made within thirty days, and this clause must be on the back of the receipt; women may not be sent to any places of bad repute; no false entries may be made; publishing any fraudulent notice or advertisement, giving false information, and making false promises to any one registering are prohibited; the license fee is \$10 the first year, and \$5 thereafter, with a \$500 bond; the Commissioner of the Bureau of Statistics is responsible for the enforcement of this law.

By comparison with the preceding laws it will be seen that Connecticut covers some vital points, but also neglects others equally important.

**ILLINOIS.**—This is a new law, in operation since May, 1903, and its efficiency has scarcely been tested. It provides that all agencies shall first

obtain a license, the fee for which is \$50; the license must designate the street and number, and, with a copy of the law, be posted in the office; there must be a bond of \$500 with approved sureties; a register must be kept, and the fee charged may not exceed \$2, for which a receipt must be given; when a position is not obtained within one month, the fee must be refunded, if the demand is made within thirty days; no women may be sent to disreputable places; no fraudulent advertisements shall be published, or false information given; no agency shall be conducted in, or in connection with, any place where intoxicating liquors are sold; the Commissioner of Labor is entrusted with the enforcement of the law, and violations of its provisions constitute a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine not exceeding \$100 and imprisonment not exceeding six months; all moneys received from fees and fines constitute a fund for enforcing the law.

While this law is an improvement over the previous one, it is powerless to remedy many abuses in Chicago, and has one or two unwise provisions, such as entrusting the enforcement to the superintendent of the free State agency, who thus inspects the books and working of all rival agencies. Cities the size of Chicago have enough agencies to require the entire time of a supervisor and inspectors.

LOUISIANA.—This law requires permission from the mayor, before an agency is opened. The license fee is \$25, and a \$1000 bond is required that the agent will well and truly carry out the purpose for which the agency was established. Word from New Orleans states that the only part of this law

which is enforced is the collection of the license fee.

**MAINE.**—A State law authorizes municipal authorities to grant licenses for \$1 per year to suitable persons who give employment to domestic servants and other laborers; fees may not be kept unless employment of the kind sought is furnished; and copies of the law must be posted in every agency.

**MASSACHUSETTS.**—The State law has some general provisions and the Boston law is a combination of these and of police regulations. This is the best working law in the country. Agencies are divided into two classes, the regulations for Class I. providing: Class I. includes every form of employee except coachmen, grooms, hostlers, longshoremen, lumbermen, seamstresses, cooks, scrub-women, laundresses, nurses (except professional), chambermaids, maids of all work, domestics, servants, agricultural and other laborers (except seamen), all of which are in the second class. The license fee is \$25, and the employment fee for all positions paying under \$4 weekly is seventy-five cents for women and \$1 for men, and for all over \$4, twenty per cent. of the first week's wages for women and twenty-five per cent. for men. This fee is returnable within four days of demand, provided no employee or position is furnished within six days. If an employee fails to remain ten days or is discharged, a new employee or position must be furnished or three fifths of the fee refunded. Transportation must be refunded by the agency if no vacancy exists where the employee is sent. No office is compelled to return a fee to an employer who fails to keep an agreement. The



provisions for Class II. differ in respect to fees. Fees must not exceed the amount of the first week's wages. If the employee is discharged, the agency cannot retain more than one day's pay for each week that the employee has remained. Provisions which are the same for both classes are: Fine for running an agency without a license, \$10 daily; receipts must be given and the law conspicuously posted in the office; the name and designation as an agency must be on the door; a register of a pattern approved by the police must be kept and be open to inspection; licenses may be revoked for any good cause shown.

Whoever, as proprietor or keeper of an intelligence or employment office, either personally or through an agent or employee, sends any woman or girl to enter (as inmate or servant) any house of ill-fame, or other place resorted to for the purpose of prostitution, the character of which could have been ascertained by him on reasonable inquiry, for each offence, is punishable by a fine of not less than fifty dollars, nor more than two hundred dollars.

The success of the Boston law—and it is the only one which can be really so called—is due primarily to the frequent inspection, to the clear classification of offices, to the rapid disposal of complaints, and to the fact that it is based upon a knowledge of conditions. An investigation of agencies conducted by the Woman's Educational and Industrial Union led to the passage of this law. The avowed policy of the city is to reduce the number of agencies, and so decrease unfair competition, and it stands alone in permitting the agent to keep the fee when applicants

break agreements. The criticisms of this law are that the fees allowed the second class are entirely disproportionate to those permitted the first class, and that the inspection is not adequate. In addition to the police, Boston needs women inspectors, for two thirds of the agencies are conducted by women for women, and many things escape perfunctory police inspection. The Boston law does demonstrate that private agencies can be regulated, and it shows unmistakably what are the essential features of such regulations. Even with its method of inspection, the evils have been reduced to a minimum, when compared with other cities. Every agent knows the law and fears it; and from our visit to agencies where we asked concessions, we learned it had a preventive value, and this should be a distinct encouragement to cities which hope to regulate private agencies.

MICHIGAN.—There is no State law, but one city, Detroit, has an ordinance which requires a license from the mayor; the fee is \$15 per year, and the bond \$500; one license covers but one place of business and may not be assigned without the written consent of the mayor; a register must be kept with the name and address of all applicants, and be open for inspection; fees may not exceed fifty cents for females and \$1 for males and a receipt must be given; if no place is obtained within six days the fee must be refunded; when the salary is over \$30, they may charge ten per cent. of the first month's salary; copies of the law in English and in German must be posted in the agency; penalties may be imposed for any improper device, deceit, misrepresen-

tation, false pretence, or imposition, or for the use of the agency for any improper purpose. Differences are usually adjusted in the mayor's office, and the usual penalty is revocation of the license, unless the offence is a grave one, as of morals, then it is classed as a misdemeanor.

**MINNESOTA.**—Every person hiring an employee must be given a written duplicate copy of the terms of the engagement, containing rate of wages, kind of service, etc., and any one failing to get employment according to the terms of the contract may recover damages; the license fee is \$100 and the bond \$10,000. In addition, St. Paul requires a license fee of \$50, and a bond of \$2000 from agencies for men; and a \$25 fee and \$500 bond from those for women; location on any premises where liquor is sold is prohibited.

It is worthy of notice that the agencies where fraud alone is possible require a larger bond than do those where both fraud and immorality are found.

**MISSOURI.**—A license is required, and any one who agrees, promises, or advertises through press or letter to furnish employment for money or any other thing of value, and fails to do so within the time agreed upon, or a reasonable time, must return the fee. St. Louis imposes a license fee of \$30 annually, and requires that the applicant for a license must have the endorsement of the police commissioners that he is a person of good moral character; if any one makes wilful misrepresentation, receives money for positions not secured, demands unusual or exorbitant fees, or is guilty of any deception

whatsoever, the fine may be \$50, and the license may be revoked; the mayor may also revoke the license for any good cause shown, but the proprietor must have a reasonable opportunity to defend himself.

NEW JERSEY.—The State law simply empowers cities to license, regulate, and fix the rate of compensation and to require bonds; it prohibits unlicensed persons from opening agencies, and enables cities to provide proper inspection and provisions. In accordance with this law, and as a result of the agitation in New York, Jersey City has an ordinance which went into effect July 1, 1904, which provides that applicants for licenses must furnish the chief of police with satisfactory evidence that they are persons of good moral character; a license is required, fee \$5, and a bond of \$200. When persons are sent where there is no employment the agency is liable for the car fare, and the license may be revoked if it is not returned; receipts are required, and upon failure to obtain help or positions the full fee must be refunded, and each agency must give a guarantee to furnish help or positions for three months. Two dollars is the fee allowed from employers and \$1 from employees; the law must be printed on the back of the receipts; registers are required containing for the employee the name, age, nationality, where last employed, reasons for leaving, and references; the license must be posted in the office.

NEW YORK.—New York has a new State law which went into effect on May 1st of the present year. The law was drafted by the Legislative Committee of the Woman's Municipal League of New

York City, and is based upon the investigations as presented in this volume. The chairman of the committee of the League, representative New York City officials, reputable employment agents, and the author, co-operated in both the drafting and passage of the law. Because of the thorough investigation, and the co-operation of practical men engaged in the business, this law is considered a model employment agency law—a claim which only its actual working can demonstrate, and for which there has not yet been time. This law is given in full, for its suggestive value to other cities:

“Section 1. Definitions.—The term person when used in this act, means and includes any individual, company, association, or corporation, or their agents, and the term employment agency means and includes the business of keeping an intelligence office, employment bureau, or other agency or office for procuring work or employment for persons seeking employment where a fee or privilege is exacted, charged or received directly or indirectly for procuring or assisting to procure employment, work, or a situation of any kind, or for procuring or providing help for any person, whether such fee is collected from the applicant for employment or the applicant for help, excepting agencies for procuring employment for school-teachers exclusively. The term fee as used in this act means money or a written promise to pay money.

“§ 2. License.—No person shall open, keep or carry on any such employment agency in the cities of the first and second class, unless every such person shall procure a license therefor from the mayor of the city in which such person intends to conduct such agency. Any person who shall open or conduct such an employment

agency without first procuring said license shall be punishable by a fine not exceeding two hundred and fifty dollars, or, on failure to pay such fine, by imprisonment not exceeding thirty days. Such license shall be granted upon the payment to said mayor of a fee of twenty-five dollars annually for such employment agencies in cities of the first and second class. Every license shall contain the name of the person licensed, a designation of the city, street and number of the house in which the person licensed is authorized to carry on the said employment agency, and the number and date of such license. Such license shall not be valid to protect any other than the person to whom it is issued or any place other than that designated in the license unless consent is obtained from the mayor. No such agency shall be located in rooms used for living purposes, where boarders or lodgers are kept, or on premises where intoxicating liquors are sold, excepting cafés and restaurants in office buildings. If said licensed person shall conduct a lodging house for the unemployed, separate and apart from such agency, it shall be so designated in the license. The application for such license shall be filed not less than one month prior to the granting of said license and shall be accompanied by the affidavits of two persons who have known the applicant or the chief officers thereof, if a corporation for five years, stating that the said applicant is a person of good moral character. The license shall run to the first Tuesday of May next ensuing the date thereof and no longer unless sooner revoked by the mayor.

“§ 3. Bond.—The mayor of said city shall require such person to file with his application for a license a bond in due form to the people of the said city in the penal sum of one thousand dollars in cities of the first and second class, with two or more sufficient sureties, and conditioned that the obligor will not violate any of

the duties, terms, conditions, provisions or requirements of this act. If any person shall be aggrieved by the misconduct of any such licensed person, and shall recover judgment against him therefor, such person may, after the return unsatisfied, either in whole or in part, of any execution issued upon said judgment, maintain an action in his own name upon the bond of said employment agent in any court having jurisdiction of the amount claimed provided such court shall, upon application made for the purpose, grant such leave to prosecute.

“§ 4. Register; references.—It shall be the duty of every such licensed person to keep a register, approved by the mayor, in which shall be entered, in the English language, the date of every application for employment; the name and address of the applicant; the amount of the fee received, and whenever possible, the names and addresses of former employers or persons to whom such applicant is known. Such licensed person shall also enter in a separate register approved by the mayor in the English language, the name and address of every applicant for help, the date of such application, the kind of help requested, the names of the persons sent, with the designation of the one employed, the amount of the fee received and the rate of wages agreed upon. The aforesaid registers of applicants for employment and for help shall be open during office hours to inspection by the mayor. No such licensed person, his agent or employees, shall make any false entry in such registers. It shall be the duty of every licensed person, whenever possible, to communicate orally or in writing with at least one of the persons mentioned as references for every applicant for work in private families, or employed in a fiduciary capacity, and the result of such investigation shall be kept on file in such agency.

“§ 5. Fees; receipts.—The fees charged applicants for employment as lumbermen, agricultural hands, coachmen, grooms, hostlers, seamstresses, cooks, waiters, waitresses, scrub-women, laundresses, maids, nurses (except professional) and all domestics and servants, unskilled workers and general laborers, shall not in any case exceed ten per centum of the first month's wages, and for all other applicants for employment, shall not exceed the amount of the first week's wages or salary or five per centum of the first year's salary. In case the applicant shall not accept or obtain help or employment, through such agency, then such licensed person shall on demand, repay the full amount of the said fee, allowing five days' time to determine the fact of the applicant's failure to obtain help or employment; except when it appears that the said licensed person has, in good faith, attempted to procure help or employment for said applicant, then he shall be entitled to retain of such fee paid, an amount not exceeding fifty cents. If an employee furnished fails to remain one week in the situation, a new employee shall be furnished or three-fifths of the fee returned, within four days of demand; if the employee is discharged within one week without said applicant's fault another position shall be furnished or three-fifths of the fee returned. Failure of said applicant for help to notify said licensed person that such help has been obtained through means other than said agency shall entitle said licensed person to retain or collect three-fifths of the said fee. It shall be the duty of such licensed person to give to every applicant for employment from whom a fee shall be received a receipt in which shall be stated, the name of said applicant, the date and amount of the fee, and the purpose for which it is paid, and to every applicant for help a receipt stating the name and address of said applicant, the date and amount of the fee, and the kind



of help to be provided. Every such receipt shall have printed on the back thereof a copy of this section in the English language and in languages which persons commonly doing business with such office can understand. No such licensed person shall receive or accept any valuable thing or gift as a fee or in lieu thereof and no fee shall be accepted by such licensed person for any other purpose except as herein provided. No such licensed person shall divide fees with contractors or other employers to whom applicants for employment are sent. Every such licensed person shall give to each applicant for employment a card containing the name and address of such employment agency and the written name and address of the person to whom the applicant is sent for employment. Every such licensed person shall post in a conspicuous place in each room of such agency a plain and legible copy of this act, which shall be printed in languages, which persons commonly doing business with such office can understand.

“§ 6. Employment contract.—No such person shall induce or attempt to induce any employee to leave his employment with a view to obtaining other employment through such agency. Whenever such licensed person or any other acting for him, agrees to send one or more persons to work as contract laborers in any one place outside the city in which such agency is located, the said licensed person shall file with the mayor within five days after the contract is made, a statement containing the following items: name and address of the employer, name and address of the employee; nature of the work to be performed, hours of labor; wages offered, destination of the persons employed, and terms of transportation. A duplicate copy of this statement shall be given to the applicant for employment in a language which he is able to understand.

“§ 7. Character of employer; fraud. — No such licensed person shall send or cause to be sent any female help as servants or inmates to any questionable place or place of bad repute, house of illfame, or assignation house, or to any house or place of amusement kept for immoral purposes, the character of which such licensed person could have ascertained upon reasonable inquiry. No such licensed person shall knowingly permit questionable characters or procurers to frequent such agency. No such licensed person shall publish or cause to be published any false or fraudulent notice or advertisement; all advertisements of such employment agency by means of cards, circulars, or signs and in newspapers and other publications, and all letterheads, receipts, and blanks shall contain the name and address of such employment agency and no such licensed person shall give any false information, or make any false promise concerning employment to any applicant who shall register for employment or help.

“§ 8. Enforcement.—In cities of the first class the enforcement of this act shall be entrusted to a commissioner to be known as a commissioner of licenses, who shall be appointed by the mayor, and whose salary together with those of inspectors to be appointed by him shall be fixed by the board of estimate and apportionment. He shall appoint inspectors who shall make at least bimonthly visits to every such agency excepting agencies exclusively for procuring executive, clerical, and technical positions for men only, which shall be inspected on complaint made to said commissioner. Such inspectors shall see that all the provisions of this act are complied with, and shall have no other duties. Complaints against any such licensed person shall be made orally or in writing to the commissioner and notice of such complaints shall be made orally or otherwise as the

commissioner may direct to said licensed person and upon such complaint a hearing shall be had before him within three days. Said commissioner shall keep a record of all such complaints and hearings. The said commissioner shall revoke any license for any good cause shown, but reasonable opportunity shall be given said licensed person to defend himself. Whenever for any cause such license is revoked, said commissioner shall not issue another license to said licensed person or his representative. In cities of the second class the duties of said commissioner may be performed by the mayor, or an officer appointed by him. Any violation of the provisions of this act shall constitute a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not more than two hundred and fifty dollars or imprisonment for not more than one year, except as provided in section two, and the commissioner shall institute criminal proceedings for its enforcement before any court of competent jurisdiction."

For the enforcement of this law, New York City has created a special department, with offices apart from its other administrative work. A commissioner of licenses has been appointed, and he has a force of twenty inspectors, three of whom are women, appointed under civil service rules. There is a room where complaints are heard daily, and a law and complaint clerk investigates all complaints and reports of inspectors before they come before the commissioner, or are referred to the attorney for prosecution. Under this law, New York City has the most complete system and thorough methods, requiring as it does the services of twenty people, at a cost for the first year of \$35,000. There are in greater New York 632 licensed employment agencies,

and more than one hundred others will be brought under the new law.

This State law applies to Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, and other second-class cities, but its enforcement in them is by the mayor rather than through a separate department.

In its applicability to other cities there are one or two features which may seem undesirable. One is the high rate of fees allowed mercantile agencies, which appear disproportionate to the services rendered. This law authorizes what may result in a registration fee, for it permits the agency to retain fifty cents when it can show that it has in good faith attempted to fulfil its obligations. The new law requires from the agency elaborate records and printed material, office equipment, higher rents, more expensive advertising, greater care in placing employees, investigation of references, and limitations upon fees and where help may be sent, and for this there must be some provision if agencies are to conduct business at a profit. The object of the New York law is to enable every honest agent to conduct his business under fair conditions, so that his interest will be in its enforcement rather than in its evasion, and not to work hardship to any honest agent, no matter how small his business.

The methods of procedure by which this law was passed may interest others who are struggling with this problem. For two years the investigations were carried on without publication or comment. Then the bill was drafted. At the same time invitations were sent out to city officials and employment agents to meet and discuss the proposed bill;

and upon request duplicate copies of all of the records and other evidence were sent to the mayor's office, and the facts were given to the press. These were of such a nature, and the proofs so indisputable, that public sympathy and interest were won for the proposed law. At these hearings employment agents were heard and alterations made, and the criticisms and suggestions of the various city commissioners received. One public hearing on the bill was given before it was sent to Albany. The result was, that though the committee had but a month to get it through the legislature, and it vitally affected some eight hundred agencies, there was no opposition at the Albany hearings, and only four votes against it in the Senate, and these represented Rochester agencies. No amendments were made, and the reputable agents are now united in two associations, each with a legislative committee to enforce the law and raise the standards of the entire business. This success seems primarily due to two things: an indisputable knowledge of conditions; and, second, the willingness to co-operate, and find out under what regulations the agents themselves could work most honestly, and to grant any fair demands. The provisions of the New York law are a tribute to the fairness on both sides, for where one side made concessions on fees, so that agents could live by honest means, the other side had to yield on such vital points as the location in saloons and living rooms, immoral practices, deceptions, and granted the many stringent clauses necessary to prevent fraud, and which meant much expense to them.

Those interested in passing the law do not con-

sider that it alone will remedy the conditions in New York City, and there exist a permanent committee which is interested in its enforcement; another which will investigate any hardships caused by the new law; an organization which is starting model employment agencies; another which is studying conditions closely allied to employment agencies; and a union of the best agencies. All of these are co-operating with the new commissioner and his force. These movements have been previously described under remedies.

OHIO.—This State has a new State law, passed this spring, which requires a license fee of from \$50 to \$100, and a bond of \$500. Charitable agencies are excluded. The Commissioner of Labor has the enforcement of this law. Agencies are to be investigated before licenses are issued.

PENNSYLVANIA.—The State law requires a license, which, with the schedule of fees permitted by law, must be publicly exposed in the agency; the license may be revoked or a fine not exceeding \$200 imposed for giving false information or for making false promises. The fee is \$50 annually.

Since all of the abuses previously outlined exist in Philadelphia, this law is clearly inadequate.

RHODE ISLAND.—The State law simply empowers cities to regulate agencies, and leaves it to the town councils to issue licenses, to determine the amount of fees and the grounds for revocation of licenses. The Providence ordinance illustrates what has been done under this law. It requires that a register be kept, containing the name and address of the employer and employee and the amount of the fee

paid; office hours are limited from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M.; fees must not exceed \$1 each for employer and employee; if a position is not found within six days, the fee must be refunded; the agent shall not induce any person to leave the employment in which he has been placed; the license may be revoked for this or for any other good cause shown; and the license fee is \$20. This is the only law, except that of New York, which covers the practice of removing employees after they are placed, in order to secure an additional fee.

VIRGINIA.—The law requires that the judge of corporation or county courts must certify, from personal knowledge or from evidence of a credible witness taken under oath before the court, that the applicant is a person of good character and honest demeanor; the license fee is \$50. Cities have not required much beyond this, for Richmond demands only a license fee of from \$30 to \$50.

WASHINGTON.—There is no State law, but Seattle, under the civil service commission, has an excellent ordinance. It provides that applications for licenses must be in writing, state the place of business, and contain the endorsement of three responsible and respectable citizens, to the effect that the applicant is of good moral character and thoroughly responsible; the license may be issued to but one individual, who shall not be a saloon-keeper, and no agency shall be in a saloon or in immediately adjoining rooms in which liquor is sold; it requires a bond of \$500; that registers shall be kept, in one of which shall be entered in English the name, address, and nature of the employment, and, in

another, all facts showing the dealings with the applicant; the fee shall not exceed \$1 for all positions paying between \$50 and \$75; and for all wages above this, the arrangement is to be left to the parties concerned; board may not be computed upon a basis higher than \$20 per month; fees shall be accepted only at the time positions are furnished, and no agent shall pay to the employer any fee or valuable thing for the privilege of furnishing help, nor charge a fee for furnishing employment for any work or contract in which he is interested; licenses are not transferable without permission; the license fee is \$250 annually, and for agencies furnishing women exclusively, \$100; the labor commissioner is empowered to enforce the law, but the mayor may revoke a license for any good cause, after the holder has had a reasonable opportunity to defend himself. This law admirably covers some evils of contract labor, but in others may work hardships.

WISCONSIN.—The State law requires a license and it must designate the place and is not transferable without consent; the employer and employee must have duplicate copies of the terms of the contract, including length of time, rate of wages, etc., together with the name and address of the employer; failure to secure employment by the terms of the contract, by reason of fraud or misrepresentation, is sufficient cause for action; the license fee is \$10, and the bond required is \$1000. This law does not apply to agencies conducted by women, for securing employment for women only.

FREE AGENCIES.—Undoubtedly one explanation of the small number of States which regulate



employment agencies is the belief that free State agencies act as a regulation. Ohio, Maryland, Nebraska, Missouri, Montana, and Kansas consider this sufficient legislation. Colorado has abolished its free public agency and passed a stringent employment agency law; and Washington, Connecticut, New York, and Illinois have seen the necessity for effective legislation, in addition to these free agencies. The methods of these free agencies have been previously discussed, and the reasons have been given for their inefficiency as regulators of private agencies.

**METHODS OF LEGISLATION.**—From this brief digest of existing laws it is seen that there are four distinct methods: The first is where the State regulates the entire system, both enacting and enforcing the law, as in Illinois, where the Commissioner of Labor and his deputy, the superintendent of the free State agency, interpret and enforce the law. The arguments in favor of State regulation are: that cities will thus have uniform provisions; that the whole matter is under one responsible head; that, as this is primarily a labor problem, it falls within the jurisdiction of a State labor commission, and that under such a commission, it is less subject to graft and political influence. The arguments against it are, that the Labor Commission has charge of free public agencies, which are competitive, and the knowledge gained through its inspection can be used for its advancement; that the employment agency is a city institution and as such should be regulated by a city department; and that a State commission is a foreign element entering into the

control of a large number of city enterprises. If this State method has been given a fair trial in Illinois, the conditions found in Chicago are a strong argument against it.

The second method is where the State passes a general law in the nature of an empowering act, but leaves all of the specific regulations to each city. The New Jersey and Rhode Island laws are such, both Jersey City and Providence having passed such ordinances. The advantage is that the State has an interest in the matter and still does not violate home-rule principles. The chief objection is that these State laws are not sufficiently definite and mandatory, and that cities may not take up the subject at all.

The third method is where the State makes all of the regulations, but leaves the actual enforcement to the city. This is the New York and the Massachusetts law. The latter differs from the former in that the State is supplemented by police rules, but the principle is essentially the same. This method insures the interest of the State, gives the law more permanency, and makes it possible to utilize all of the city machinery in its enforcement. It also vests some discretionary power in the chief executive. The chief objection is, that this question affects the State as well as the city, but it is also interstate, as these agencies send employees all over the country, and the argument is as good for national as for State control. Agencies are best controlled at the point from which they operate, and that is invariably the city. No law should make it possible for the city officials and administration to know nothing of the

location, conditions, and methods of its employment agencies, but this is precisely the result in Chicago. Then, again, city organizations, departments, and institutions are the ones to which reports of abuses naturally come, and these co-operate more readily with a city than with a State department, especially where State politics differ from those of the city, as in New York and Chicago.

The fourth method is where cities, independent of the State, pass their own regulations, as in Detroit, Michigan, and Seattle, Washington. These laws are less permanent, are likely to change with the party in power, and depend much upon the administration for proper enforcement, but they are in both effective.

Some States and cities may not find any one of these laws adapted to their needs, and for these the following suggestions are made of what are essential for any law which seeks to regulate private agencies: A license fee, not exceeding \$50; for this should never be large enough to make it an object of graft. A bond not exceeding \$2000, and preferably \$1000, to protect the public from "one-man frauds." Saloons, living rooms, tenements, and gambling-places are undesirable localities. Every city having over twenty-five offices has enough work to keep one inspector busy. Inspection, careful and regular, is *absolutely essential* to any efficient employment-agency law. Preliminary requirements, such as knowledge of proposed place of business, character of applicant, etc., are essential to prevent frauds. Regulation of fees is desirable. Registration fees are the open door to fraud and should be abolished.

A maximum fee of \$3 for employers and \$2 for employees, or ten per cent. of the first month's wages in intelligence offices, and ten per cent. of the first month or fifty per cent. of the first week for commercial agencies, seems fair. Fees should **always be** high enough to enable the agent to live without resorting to illegal means. There should always be adequate provision for refunding fees, but upon conditions fair to the agent as well as to the applicant. Laws which compel agents to return fees, when they have rendered services, or when applicants have broken their contracts, by their very injustice make underhand methods necessary. Fees should be refunded at the end of a week in intelligence offices, and at the end of one month in commercial agencies, if no positions are offered. All fees, except money, should be prohibited. Requirements for registries and receipts, and posting the law in the office, are essential. Emphatic and comprehensive legislation is required to cover fraudulent advertising, false statements and promises, and immoral practices. There should be a convenient place for complaints, and these should be heard at once, so that the time of the employee could be saved. So far as possible the employee should have a copy of the agreement which he makes in the office.

There are peculiar conditions in each city which may need special provisions, but in general the conditions of all agencies in all cities would be improved by such regulations as the preceding.



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